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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MASTERS OF FRENCH LITERATURE, 1901

A LIFE OF SAINTE-BEUVE, 1909

JOHN MORLEY, AND OTHER ESSAYS, 1920

WORDSWORTH'S FRENCH DAUGHTER, 1921

DREAMS AND MEMORIES, 1922

SPIRIT OF DELIGHT, 1928

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

From the drawing by W. Shuter, April, 1798

Frontispiece

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

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By GEORGE McLEAN HARPER

WOODROW WILSON PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE IN
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"A man of uncommon genius is a man of high passions and lofty design."—WILLIAM GODWIN

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TO

MY DEAR WIFE

WHO HAS SHARED THE JOYS AND TOIL OF
THIS WORK

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PREFACE

In preparing for the press this revised edition the author has availed himself of much new material which has been brought to light since 1916, when the work was first published, and also of numerous and helpful reviews. Among fresh sources may be mentioned especially his own little book "Wordsworth's French Daughter," 1921, Professor Emile Legouis's "William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon," 1922, and Professor Ernest de Selincourt's superb *variorum* edition of "The Prelude," 1926. There has been in these thirteen years a great revival of Wordsworthian study, to which many critics have contributed, notably Professor Arthur Beatty in his "William Wordsworth, his Doctrine and Art in their Historical Relations," 1922. The chief documentary sources used in the former editions of the present work, and acknowledged there fully, were the "Memoirs" by the poet's nephew Christopher, 1851, the letters of Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs. Marshall (Jane Pollard), Knight's "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," Ernest Hartley Coleridge's collection of his grandfather's "Letters," Mr. E. V. Lucas's "The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," Mrs. Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends," Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals, the unpublished correspondence between her and Mrs. Clarkson, the Crabb Robinson manuscripts, Coleridge's notebooks, "Le Général Michel Beaupuy," by MM. Bussière and

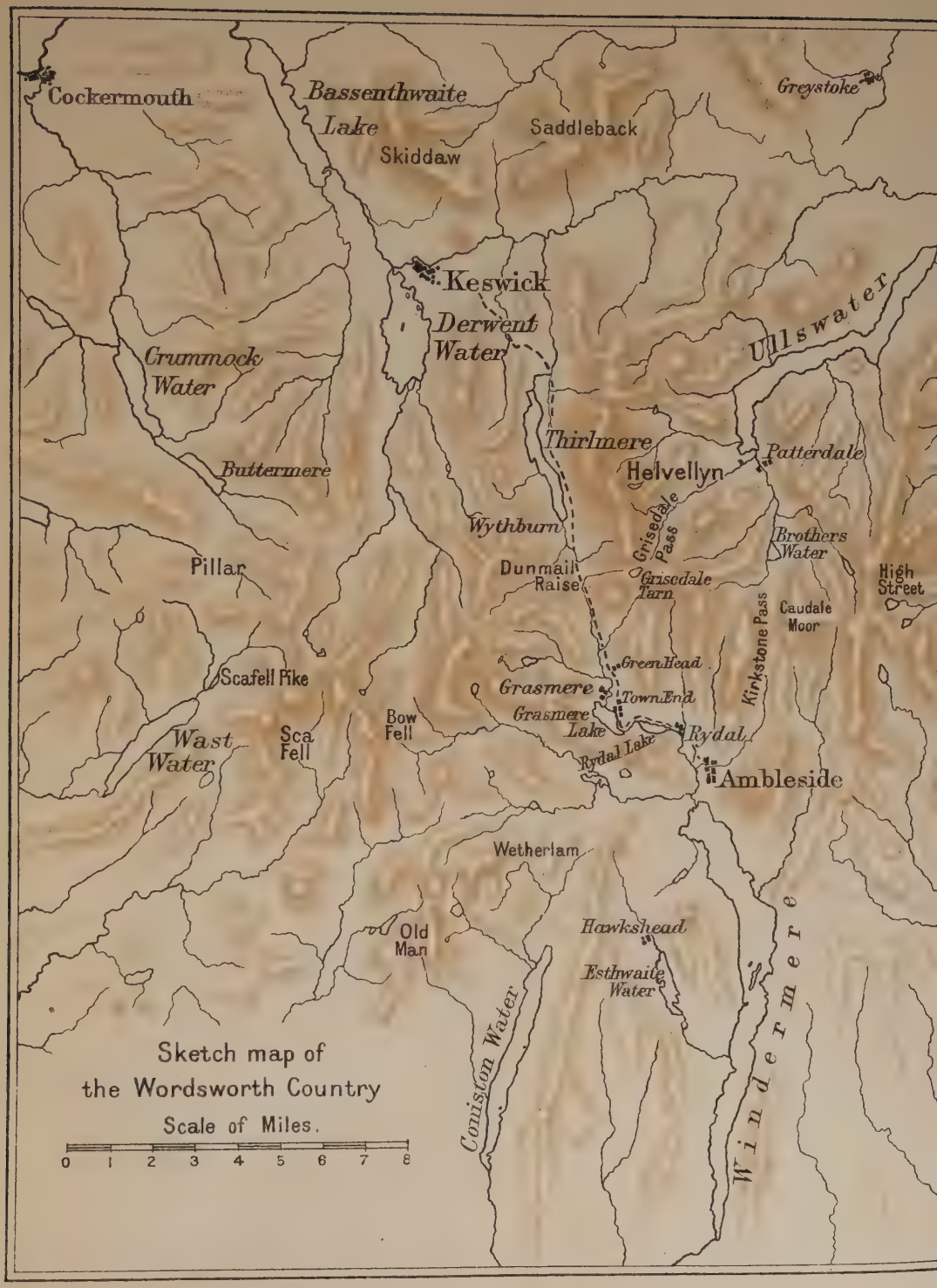
Legouis, and the comments dictated by Wordsworth in 1843 to Miss Fenwick. In this edition detailed references to these sources have generally been omitted, but the author could not, without ingratitude, fail to mention once more his appreciation of the fruitful labours of Professor Legouis and the helpful counsel of Mr. Gordon Wordsworth.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	vii
I.	THE PERMANENCE OF WORDSWORTH	1
II.	HOME, SCHOOL, COLLEGE	13
III.	ADRIFT	56
IV.	INFLUENCE OF ROUSSEAU	79
V.	IN REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE	89
VI.	A REVOLUTIONIST IN ENGLAND	127
VII.	PHILANTHROPIC PLANS	160
VIII.	THE GODWIN CIRCLE	179
IX.	DOROTHY	200
X.	COLERIDGE	227
XI.	THREE PERSONS AND ONE SOUL	252
XII.	"LYRICAL BALLADS"	271
XIII.	GRASMERE AND THE LAKES	299
XIV.	WORDSWORTH THE CRITIC	326
XV.	HAPPINESS AND WORK	352
XVI.	MARRIAGE	372
XVII.	TOUR IN SCOTLAND	391
XVIII.	NEW INFLUENCES	404
XIX.	NEW SONG	432
XX.	CRISIS OF MIDDLE LIFE	452
XXI.	LOSSES AND FEARS	495
XXII.	"THE EXCURSION"	514
XXIII.	RETREAT AND SURRENDER	530
XXIV.	FAME AND FAVOUR	558
XXV.	THE SAGE OF RYDAL	580
	INDEX	613

ILLUSTRATIONS

		PAGE
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, FROM THE SHUTER DRAWING	*Frontispiece*	
THE HOUSE IN WHICH WORDSWORTH WAS BORN	*To face*	14
DAME TYSON'S COTTAGE, HAWKSHEAD	,,	40
FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM ORLEANS	,,	94
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, FROM THE HANCOCK DRAWING	,,	220
RACEDOWN		226
ALFOXDEN		270
THE GOSLAR HOUSE	*To face*	282
DOVE COTTAGE, FROM THE FRONT	,,	306
FACSIMILE OF PAGE IN DOROTHY'S JOURNAL	,,	320
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, FROM NASH'S DRAWING	,,	326
DOVE COTTAGE, FROM THE ORCHARD	,,	368
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, FROM THE OIL-PAINTING IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. JOHN MURRAY	,,	400
THE LIVING-ROOM, DOVE COTTAGE	,,	480
RYDAL MOUNT IN WORDSWORTH'S TIME	,,	504
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, FROM HAYDON'S PAINTING	,,	544
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, FROM PICKERSGILL'S DRAWING	,,	592
GRASMERE CHURCH	,,	608
SKETCH MAP, THE WORDSWORTH COUNTRY	,,	1


Cockermouth
Bassenthwaite Lake
Skiddaw
Saddleback
Greystoke
Keswick
Derwent Water
Ullswater
Crummock Water
Thirlmere
Helvellyn
Patterdale
Buttermere
Wythburn
Grisedale Pass
Brothers Water
Pillar
Dunmail Raise
Grisedale Tarn
High Street
Caudale Moor
Kirkstone Pass
Greenhead
Scafell Pike
Grasmere
Town End
Grasmere Lake
Rydal
Rydal Lake
Bow Fell
Wast Water
Sca Fell
Ambleside
Wetherlam
Old Man
Hawkshead
Esthwaite Water
Coniston Water
Windermere
Sketch map of the Wordsworth Country
Scale of Miles.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

CHAPTER I

THE PERMANENCE OF WORDSWORTH

WORDSWORTH is more widely read and more often quoted than any other English poet, except Shakespeare and Milton. He is therefore a power in the world. Countless thousands of English-speaking men and women have died and been forgotten. The influence of every one of them lives, no doubt, and will live for ever, but only a few survive by name and with some degree of fulness. Wordsworth's mind and heart, his view of life as a whole, his most delicate perceptions, his innermost feelings, are still a part of the spiritual world in which we move, and there is every likelihood that what we may call his personality will continue to exist for many generations.

I can imagine the ghosts of great discoverers, conquerors, and statesmen, complaining among the shades that they are forgotten in the upper world, while poets continue to walk in the sunshine of human gratitude and are as real a thousand years after death as when they moved on earth. "Men of action," as they called themselves, they wonder why, not to them, but to poets, should be given "the name that honoureth most and most endureth." A little reflection on the haunting love of companionship which dwells in every soul would furnish an answer. The poets give us themselves. They have the simplicity to suppose that we will care for their confidences. And they possess an art of communication which is so pleasing to our senses

that, almost for its sake alone, we should be willing to listen.

The first question we must ask, then, in estimating the qualities of Wordsworth's poetry which may be expected to give it permanence, concerns his possession of artistic mastery. And it is certainly not overbold to say that in perfection and range of technical skill he is a master. Taking into account the whole of his poetry, and not merely the best or the most well-known part of it, one is impressed with the correctness, the vigour, the ingenuity, and the variety of his versification. He is rich in metrical forms. His devices for entrapping the eye and ear are endless, and are the more subtly effective as they seldom obtrude themselves upon our attention, which he always occupies with something beyond the music and the form.

His diction, too, and syntax are of vast range and singular exactness. He keeps, as regards the grammatical elements of style, strictly to the sound English tradition. To an uncommon extent his language is free from learned affectations and ephemeral fashions. He was an observant and purposeful student of our elder poets, of Chaucer and Spenser and Shakespeare, of Drayton and Daniel and Milton, of Dryden and Collins and Gray. His is pure English and undefiled. With only the very smallest allowance for exceptions, we may say that his language would have passed current at any time in the last three hundred and fifty years. This is some guarantee of its future acceptance. In the main it is not charged with a temporal alloy, is not the product of a "movement" or a "period," is neither Classical nor Romantic, is not a revival, is not local, is not exotic, is not pedantic.

In one respect, at least, the quality of Wordsworth's thought matches the breadth of his style. His mind was excessively masculine; yet through almost lifelong association with gifted women, and a peculiar dependence upon womanly sympathy, his natural asperity became tempered with feminine tenderness, and his disposition to generalize was balanced by a feminine

interest in particulars. Still, he is the most philosophical of all our great poets; he dwells in a region of ideas, which he endeavours to correlate to the sum of human experience. In all things, animate or inanimate, he perceives a spiritual life. The strength of this perception and the faith with which he tries to impart it to other minds make him a seer and prophet, though he neither repels a simple-hearted reader by setting up a system, nor creates distrust by claiming to enjoy a mystical illumination. Yet he professes, with good reason, to be a teacher.

On the other hand, except Dante, no poet capable of sustaining such flights is more rich in concrete detail. Things in themselves interest him, apart from their possible connection with the mind of man or their share in the great soul of nature. He enjoys them and finds it worth while to describe them, for the sake of their inherent attractiveness, quite apart from their ulterior significance. Whether he would have subscribed to the statement that the external world is a symbol of the Infinite Idea, I very much doubt. There were moments when he said so; but when he is most himself he is most content with nature as reality and not symbol. He never taught that nature existed as an object-lesson. He did not, in his prime, habitually think of nature as leading up to God; he thought of nature as having the Life of Life abiding in her. With reverence, then, as well as curiosity and delight, did he note her features. Until his powers and his courage for independent vision had begun to fail, he did not accept the view, so paralyzing to the pursuit and enjoyment of knowledge, that it is impious to study nature except as we behold in her a warning or a stage to an inconceivable life beyond. He dealt with this goodly frame more worthily, accepting the "joy in widest commonalty spread."

But though a great poet owes his place among his peers to qualities of style and thought that are traditionally acceptable there may yet be room in him for peculiarities of a local, temporary, or personal kind. Indeed, if he is to win a life of his own in our affections he must possess

these. Otherwise, to establish his generality he would have stripped himself of the traits which give to every human being a something all his own. There is much in Wordsworth's versification, language, choice of subjects, and mode of thought, that belongs to him alone; much, also, that belongs to his age; and not a little that is local. He experimented boldly, and was deeply moved by sympathies which made him willing to risk the disapproval of even very excellent judges. His peculiarities have at different times and for various reasons repelled readers. At first there was the complaint that his characters and diction were "low." Then a certain class objected that his philosophy was unorthodox, that it was materialistic, or at least pantheistic. Later it was discovered that it was mystical and out of touch with an age of reason and science. The style of his longer works has by some been deemed too vague and ecstatic; by others, hard and uninspired. Notwithstanding the wide scope and general applicability of his works, he is still mentioned now and then as "one of the Lake poets." He is likewise known as a poet for children, though perhaps more commonly as the poet best fitted to console the afflicted, restore the erring, and comfort the aged.

After all, it is greatly to Wordsworth's advantage that there is a certain amount of truth in every one of these limited views. They prove that he is not to be disposed of in a formula. They show how immensely varied his excellence is, how wide his appeal, how he transcends and embraces the special domains of almost all English poets who were his contemporaries. Some of the features of his work that were once peculiar to him, or to him and Coleridge, have now in large measure become elements in the method of all poets, in every land. In any case, his idiosyncrasies enrich the sum of his value by giving personal colour to his pages and saving them from that featureless perfection which we acknowledge languidly in Racine, for example, and Lamartine and Schiller. It is an enrichment of his art that the great interpreter of universal nature should have

known every foot of ground in one or two narrow valleys; for, the whole being the sum of all its parts, not to know intimately at least one part disables the judgment of a philosopher, and how much more the insight of a poet! Wordsworth studied with what seemed a petty curiosity certain individuals, preferably simple souls, in an effort to divine their motives and resources. He has been foolishly blamed for taking so much interest in paupers, idiots, weak old men, and quite ordinary children. His justification blazes forth in many a hundred lines of high political wisdom. He found his way, through the least defended approaches, to the inner recesses of human character. He became like a little child or like a poor beggar, and learned what man is. With the knowledge thus acquired of human needs and passions, he was able to understand, better even than Byron or Shelley, the effect of the French Revolution upon the feelings and conduct of men in all classes of society.

Of course, even a sound and vigorous style would not suffice to win and hold for any poet a position such as Wordsworth's. There must also be an altogether uncommon weight of character, intensity of emotional force, and reach of intellect. To note and estimate these is the special task of biography. In Wordsworth's case we have to take into account not only poetry, but several prose compositions, which deal with subjects so diverse as politics and the principles of æsthetics. His opinions, whenever he gives definite expression to them, are found to be rooted in some principle below the surface. They are original in that they are a part of his very self. He utters them grudgingly, as if loath to part with what has been so long cherished. Even when they concern matters of seeming indifference, or upon which, at least, no momentous consequences appear to hang, they are so personal to him, and have been so long pondered by him, that they carry some of the heat and passion of his soul. That they do not cohere in a system is due to the fact that his life, if reckoned by convictions and feelings, was broken in the middle. Up to a certain point he was guided by hope; later he was

driven by fear. The two halves of his life are incongruous.

The extent of the difference has never been fully appreciated, because it is not so perceptible in his poetry as it is in his letters and the reports of his conversation that have come down to us. A careful study, not only of what he said and wrote, but of what others said and wrote to him and about him, makes it quite clear that in the second half of his life he cursed what he once blessed, and blessed what he once cursed. The transition was fairly rapid, and it was complete. Moreover, it affected his poetry, affected not merely the subjects he chose and the general direction in which he turned his thoughts and feelings, but even the choice of words and the structure of his verse. As I believe that Wordsworth has influenced the tone of English and American thought, for the last eighty or ninety years, more than any other poet who lived in the nineteenth century, I have found much dramatic interest in the play and counter-play of two contending forces operating in him. In either period, considered by itself, there is essential unity; his conduct, his doctrine, and the works of his imagination, are consistent with one another. But the Wordsworth of 1816 is a different man from the Wordsworth of 1800. Since it is that later man whom we find represented in a dozen portraits and innumerable anecdotes, and not often to his advantage, the earlier and far more attractive Wordsworth is almost entirely obscured. There is, to be sure, less material for getting acquainted with that fiery and adventurous youth, now dead for more than a century, than with the famous old man who died in 1850.

Investigation of those earlier years is all the more thrilling because, while some of them are revealed to us with remarkable fulness in his sister's letters and journals and in the poet's own works and those of Coleridge, and show him in a light as attractive as it is clear, other periods, of many months' duration, are shrouded in mystery. An additional touch of romance is imparted by the presence of that sister, herself a

genius, full of originality and charm, and by the friendship of both these wayward spirits with Coleridge, a community of mind unique in human story. These "three persons and one soul" represent the fine flower of English literary culture in the eighteenth century, and the beginning of much that was most distinctive and valuable in the nineteenth. When they wandered together, heart in heart, "on sunny Quantock's airy ridge," or held high converse in the bare little cottage at Grasmere, they were moulding, in no small degree, the intellectual destiny of future generations, establishing a fresh style in poetry, and especially creating a new and vitalizing sense of the relation between poetry and life.

Poetry was to be no longer regarded as a merely decorative art. It was to spring more than ever from experience and to bear more than ever upon conduct. It was to be less academic and exclusive, and by becoming simpler in form was to appeal to a larger audience. Yet the broadening-down has been accomplished without recourse to vulgarizing methods. No one can say that Wordsworth's influence has had the effect of blunting the poetical sensibilities of our race. On the contrary, while poetry and every art associated with poetry have through his efforts become more popular, they have also attained superior delicacy. New powers of perception have been awakened, and exquisite workings of emotion have been for the first time recognized. Humanity at large has been found immensely more interesting and important than even the choicest selection from its more favoured classes. In nature herself, contemplated with a wider glance and a freer curiosity, many objects previously unregarded or even despised have been found to possess fine moral and æsthetic values. Like many another experiment in democracy, in which, after much delay, hesitation, and prophesying of evil, it has been decided to open to profane feet some ancient preserve of opportunity and enjoyment, this appeal to wider circles has been amply justified by results. Strange as it may at first seem,

the fact is that in proportion as poetry has become less aristocratic it has become more refined, and that by being universalized it has become more sacred. We require from poets a stricter warrant of heaven-given authority than our forefathers in the eighteenth century insisted upon. We are less easily contented with talent and clever workmanship, or even with mere intellectual power and emotional violence. Wordsworth taught us to expect that a poet should be a dedicated spirit, obliged by a sense of his calling and enabled by his genius to conceive of nature and of human life more worthily than other men.

A further reason for believing that Wordsworth will hold a permanent place in English literature is that still, after the lapse of two generations, he remains preeminent among our poets, from the fourteenth century to the twentieth, for the truth of his report about nature. None of his successors has equalled him in this. In his own phrase, he wrote "with his eye on the object." From the beginning, this has not been the practice of poets nearly so much as is often supposed. If poets have, since Wordsworth's time, been striving, and with very gratifying success, to report more strictly of nature and in words unencumbered with conventional meaning, the credit is in large measure due to him. Poetry would have had small chance of holding its ground in the nineteenth century except by establishing a strong claim to respect for an exactness of its own, comparable with the exactness of science. Wordsworth's poetry, in particular, has been enjoyed by men to whom no other kind of imaginative writing appeals. They have valued it for the natural way in which it rises to the loftiest flights from a firm basis in observation. Others, having regard to the end rather than the beginning, value his poetry none the less because it is from things plainly seen and intimately known that it ascends to what is beyond sight and beyond knowledge. His initial impulse towards naturalness and simplicity was political, social, and moral, not literary. It was only when his heart had been profoundly moved, and

certain convictions, having no necessary or at least no immediate connection with poetry, had been formed within him, that his style and method of writing began to change. He then immediately abandoned the standards which he had unquestioningly followed. All that he wrote before 1792 is conventional; all that he wrote between 1792 and 1798 is Revolutionary. In this second period he worked out and put in practice a theory of composition, which he thought fitting in one who had determined to obey the command, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." The attempt was heroic. It had something of the self-sacrificing recklessness of a forlorn hope. It was a gallant forward movement, but desperately lonely, and not likely to succeed unless reinforced. Coleridge brought up the needed support. Falling in with Wordsworth's advance, he strengthened it at a time when, through its own *élan*, it was in danger of wasting away. He added those elements which have been termed romantic, and interested Wordsworth, who till then was a severe realist, in legends of the wonderful. If Wordsworth could ever be termed a Romanticist, it was during the last three years of the eighteenth century. Originally and characteristically he was nothing of the sort. When he was most himself, he found sufficient inspiration in the natural world. Romanticism looked to the past, to the supernatural, to the extraordinary. Wordsworth, the true Wordsworth, dwelt in the present, felt that nature was herself divine, and strove, with the zeal of a controversialist, and at considerable risk, to show that the ordinary is as wonderful and instructive as the exceptional.

It is in this sense that he was peculiarly the prophet of an age of science. What biologists and chemists have done to reveal the wonders of the physical world, he did, in a measure, for the relations between man's mind and the objects upon which the mind plays. This vast domain of perceptions and feelings he treated with something like the self-restraint, respect, and fidelity with which men of science investigate the material uni-

verse. Nothing, he thought, was unworthy of regard. All things were so interesting, so justified in their existence and special working, that distinctions of high and low lost much of their meaning, just as mountains must appear of no peculiar significance to a man accustomed to use a powerful microscope. This state of mind in Wordsworth was a result of his conversion to the equalitarian creed of the French Revolution. Some sort of faith in human equality was the religion of that movement. Say what they will, neither the Carlyles nor the Taines can obscure this fact. And the doctrine being once accepted, it affected the very words he used.

But, after all, the first steps in his new spiritual life merely placed him, as a literary artist, on a plane with many older English poets, who wrote in a natural manner without having gone through a religious or political experience such as his. There have always been in English poetry two manners or methods. The one is natural, simple, free, and full of variety, the other artificial and much restricted. The latter prevailed, on the whole, from the time of Milton until near the close of the eighteenth century. It may be called the academic manner. Until Wordsworth and Coleridge were lifted on the ground-swell of the Revolution, they were satisfied with the fashion that prevailed in their youth. Their revolt was at first not literary, but political. Wordsworth, for example, continued to write in the academic manner when composing even those passages of "Descriptive Sketches," in 1792, which proclaimed his republican principles so vehemently that he afterwards felt constrained to suppress and alter them. However, since he respected his own genius, he was not long in changing his style to match his opinions.

Too much emphasis can hardly be laid upon the statement that Wordsworth at his best, in his great years, when he was most truly himself, when he was animated by courage and hope, was a fervent Revolutionist. His words were acts. His decisions, even in so quiet an affair as the choice of subjects and words for pastoral poems, were based on principles of the widest

scope, and were in truth momentous, as he supposed. He breathed, with joy and awe, the spirit of a glorious time. And the time found in him its most faithful and inspired interpreter. He alone, of all who have experienced or contemplated the Revolution, has left an adequate artistic record of its effect upon the spiritual life of those who welcomed it and those who opposed it.

The circumstances of his birth and early life had prepared him to embrace the Revolutionary doctrines and to fill worthily the office to which this acceptance committed him. It is probable that even the most reactionary man now living would be shocked, if he were to awake some morning in the last decade of the eighteenth century in England, by the oppressiveness of the social atmosphere. Wordsworth's boyhood was passed in a pleasant nook of English ground, where the contrast between the privileged classes and the body of the oppressed was not so violent as elsewhere. When he left it he was struck by the unhappy condition of his country. After his first visit to France he found England half choked, as he thought, with noxious fumes. He had breathed the exhilarating air of a country that had roused itself from even deadlier slumber. He came home with a new consciousness, a new outlook, and new aspirations. The contrast between what was and what he believed might be was presently deepened by the poverty and unrest occasioned by prolonged war. He himself, in the vicissitudes of his own life, was affected by both extremes of social difference. His family name and university education brought him into contact with persons of wealth and power, but the background of his memory was already filled with homely figures of poor, uneducated people, and his associations in the years before he became well known covered an unusually wide range in the social scale. He had to endure a certain share of prejudice, social as well as literary, and a certain amount of legal injustice, and he lived for some years on the verge of poverty. The sympathy which he felt for those whose lot was different from his own was not purely imaginative, but was based on much real

experience. A sense of social responsibility lay heavy upon him. He was never contented with a make-believe world or a world of books.

His excellence as an artist, the special work he performed in renovating the spirit and the style of English poetry, and his pre-eminent position as interpreter of the Revolution, assure for Wordsworth an enduring place among the greatest of our poets. He acknowledged Milton as his master. That he equalled or perhaps surpassed Milton in the quality and variety of his best achievements may be the opinion of Wordsworthians, though it is hardly the judgment of mankind. But more and more the conviction is growing that he is the greatest of our poets since Milton. There is still another ground on which he is venerated. This is the belief that, more than any other eminent poet, in any language, he reveals a mystical relation between nature and the mind of man. It is quite possible that some of his admirers exaggerate the value of this revelation; but there can be no doubt that he endeavoured, with courage and originality, and from deep conviction, to establish as a religious principle what to all genuine poets is at least a sacred instinct.

CHAPTER II

HOME, SCHOOL, COLLEGE

THE poet was born at Cockermouth, in the county of Cumberland, the second son of John Wordsworth, an attorney and law-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. His mother was Anne, only daughter of William Cookson, mercer, of Penrith, and of Dorothy, born Crackanthorp. Cockermouth and Penrith are small market towns situated twenty-five miles apart, on the northern border of the mountainous region known as the Lake District. Five children were born to John and Anne Wordsworth: Richard, on August 19, 1768; William, on April 7, 1770; Dorothy, on December 25, 1771; John, on December 4, 1772; and Christopher, on June 9, 1774. William passed his infancy and early boyhood partly at Cockermouth and partly with his mother's parents at Penrith. He remembered that his mother once said of him that he was the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious, and that he would be remarkable either for good or for evil, being of a stiff, moody, and violent temper. He carried the same toughness of resolution through life, bearing himself high in all affairs and seldom taking counsel of other men.

The Wordsworth house was a spacious brick mansion, with its face to the main street and its back towards the river Derwent and the ruins of Cockermouth Castle. The children were left much to themselves and roamed freely in a little world abounding in natural pleasures and fair humanities. He tells us in the first book of "The Prelude" that the bright blue river was a tempting playmate, and exclaims:

> Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
> In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
> Made one long bathing of a summer's day,
> Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
> Alternate, all a summer's day.

In the fifth book of "The Prelude" he contrasts the freedom of his early years with the close guidance enjoined by Rousseau, and illustrated in Thomas Day's "Sandford and Merton," expressing his gratitude for his mother's wisdom in permitting his instincts to unfold themselves without irreverent and fretful meddling. In the large quiet of her simple nature he enjoyed the immunities of childhood, its indifference to the future, its absorption in the present, its long spaces of happy solitude. The passage is of great biographical interest, in view of the high importance of childhood instincts in Wordsworth's philosophy.

Even in these earliest days William's favourite companion was his sister Dorothy, near to him in age and similar in her tastes. Late in life, speaking of her extreme sensibility, he recalled the fact that when she first heard the voice of the sea and beheld the waves breaking against the quays and piers of Whitehaven, she burst out weeping.

In 1801, when he and his sister had settled at Townend, Grasmere, he wrote the following poem in the orchard there:

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started, seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry
My sister Emmeline and I
  Together visited.

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;
Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.
The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy;
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

THE HOUSE IN WHICH WORDSWORTH WAS BORN

From a photograph by Walmsley

The manuscript sent originally to the printer had the name "Dorothy" for "Emmeline." In a note to this poem, dictated to Miss Fenwick, in 1843, the poet said:

"At the end of the garden of my father's house at Cockermouth was a high terrace that commanded a fine view of the river Derwent and Cockermouth Castle. This was our favourite playground. The terrace wall, a low one, was covered with closely-clipt privet and roses, which gave an almost impervious shelter to birds who built their nests there. The latter of these stanzas alludes to one of those nests."

Once again, in the peace of those first months with his sister at Grasmere, he wrote a poem reminiscent of their early childhood, the lines "To a Butterfly":

Stay near me—do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy!
Float near me; do not yet depart!
Dead times revive in thee:
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art!
A solemn image to my heart,
My father's family!

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey;—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.

The superiority of Wordsworth was inborn. A congenital gift of intelligence and susceptibility was shared between him and his sister, while his brother John possessed a rare appreciation of poetry, and his brother Christopher, who became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, was endowed with eminent strength of mind. A spirit of light must therefore have dwelt in the rather severe brick house at Cockermouth, where this extraordinary brood came into existence. Both

parents happily rejected the temptation to warp the well-born natures, of whose fine quality they must have been aware. Long visits to their mother's old home at Penrith and occasional trips to the seashore appear to have been the only variations in the placid lives of the children.

Mrs. Wordsworth died in March, 1778, and was buried at Penrith. Then began the dispersal, to which Dorothy in her letters ruefully refers, using more than once the expression, "How we are squandered abroad!" She was sent to live with her grandmother Cookson at Penrith, and Richard and William were sent to school at Hawkshead. For Dorothy this was the beginning of a long period of lonely suffering and spiritual homelessness. For William it was an auspicious turning-point, from which we may date one of the happiest and most receptive portions of his life. From his ninth to his eighteenth year Hawkshead was virtually his home. His younger brothers, John and Christopher, joined him there in due season; and although there must have been many reunions at Cockermouth, few traces of them remain. His father died December 30, 1783. The family estate consisted chiefly of claims, amounting to about £4,700, on the Earl of Lonsdale, who had withheld money due to his agent, and even forced from him considerable loans. He held himself superior to the law, and when subsequently the case came up for trial, he retained all the best counsel, and succeeded in thwarting justice during the rest of his life. Meanwhile, for nineteen years, the Wordsworth children lived on prospects, which would not have carried them far had not their relatives come to their assistance. The children were put in charge of their father's brother Richard and their mother's uncle Christopher Crackanthorpe Cookson. Upon the earl's death, in 1802, their property was paid to them with interest by his successor.

The village of Hawkshead is little changed from what it was in 1778. It lies in the shallow vale of Esthwaite, near the head of Esthwaite Water, a lake about two miles long, between and almost equally distant from the

larger lakes of Windermere and Coniston. The valley is sprinkled with small farms, and its higher grounds are wooded with beech and oak and fir. The little town is of great antiquity, and has long held the distinction of being a market for the wool grown in the surrounding country. It is situated near the extreme northern angle of Lancashire, which is wedged between Cumberland on the west and Westmorland on the east. Its houses, of grey stone, with thick slabbed roofs, stand in a charmingly haphazard way around several open spaces of irregular shape, called squares. There are no mansions here, and no hovels. The dwellings bear witness to that equality and that general diffusion of humble comfort which were formerly even more characteristic of the Lake country than they are now. A mountain brook flows through a buried conduit under one of the streets. It once was only half hidden by flagstones, and was an object of interest to children. On a hill that rises abruptly from one side of the village stands a noble Gothic church, of unknown age and origin. Its long grey mass can scarcely be distinguished at a distance from the rock on which it rests, so naturally, as regards colour and form, does it harmonize with its surroundings. The turf of the churchyard creeps up to the very doors, and the black foliage of immemorial yew-trees masks the gravestones of many generations, removed only a few paces from the scene of their activity. Inside, the nave spreads wide, and the aisles, with their dignified perpendicular tracery, lift their arches high, so that the light streams free in every part, and the outer world seems to mingle unquestioned with the sacred enclosure.

The free grammar-school to which the Wordsworth boys were sent was founded in 1585 by Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York, a native of the region. The building, which stands at the edge of the village and contains no dormitory for pupils, is a substantial and simple structure. A large square schoolroom, with an ample fireplace, occupies most of the ground-floor, and above are apartments for the master and the usher. The old

"forms," or long desks, still stand about the walls, and in one of them can be seen the name "William Wordsworth" deep carved in schoolboy fashion. Pure country air, blowing unchecked from field and lake, enters through the wide door and big windows. Not even the Gothic luxuriance of Winchester or Eton gives so full a sense of appropriate surroundings for the education of boys. The provision for their minds may not have been as complex as that to be found in the more famous Southern seminaries, but it was well selected, and quite generous enough when to it were added the outside influences that co-operated with books and teachers. Latin, mathematics, and the elements of Greek, were the staple subjects taught. The morning session began between six and half-past in summer, and at seven in winter, and lasted till eleven. The afternoon session was from one to five in summer, and from one to four in winter. At all other times the boys were free, since the preparation of lessons was made in school.

William Taylor, who was master from 1782 to 1786, when he died in the midst of his scholars, is the person to whom the poet refers in the lines beginning, "I come, ye little noisy Crew," and in the succeeding elegies. He also furnished some of the traits for the old man in "The Two April Mornings" and "The Fountain," and perhaps for one of the characters in "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned." Years after Taylor's death, the poet, standing opposite the tablet in the schoolroom on which the teacher's name and the record of his service were inscribed, composed his "Matthew," in which he gives a glimpse of the happy schoolmaster:

> Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
> Is silent as a standing pool;
> Far from the chimney's merry roar,
> And murmur of the village school.
>
> The sighs which Matthew heaved were sighs
> Of one tired out with fun and madness;
> The tears which came to Matthew's eyes
> Were tears of light, the dew of gladness.

The gay old man, something between a schoolmaster and a retired labourer, whose image shapes itself in one's mind on reading these poems, can have been only suggested by Taylor, who was but thirty-two when he died; yet the fact that the poet could think thus of a teacher many years his senior shows that the latter must have been a singularly gentle and humorous person, and the boy beyond his age advanced in sympathy with mature minds. Taylor died in office, bidding farewell to the boys from his death-bed.

Wordsworth's schoolmates were drawn from a wide range of society; sons of country clergymen and the professional and business men of north-country towns, sons of villagers and small farmers. The most fortunate class of all Englishmen who laboured with their hands, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were the small farmers or "statesmen" in the vales of Westmorland, Cumberland and northern Lancashire. Their ancestors came into possession of the soil before the Reformation, when the monks of Furness Abbey and other great land-owning ecclesiastical establishments encouraged independent settlement in place of feudal tenure or mere tenantship, in the hope of providing a larger and more stubborn population for defence against the Scottish raiders. They had thus, in Wordsworth's time, been for several centuries raised above the position of tenant farmers. They tilled their own soil, to which they clung with deep attachment, sentimental considerations blending with economic. They were equally disposed to guard with jealous defiance their rights of pasturage on the fells or mountain-tops. The boldness of character which they inherited from their Scandinavian forefathers was re-enforced by the sense of possession. Like the corresponding class in Scotland, they were alive to the superiority of mental attainments, and ready to make sacrifices to educate their children.

The boys lived frugally and on a plane of equality, lodging and boarding with Hawkshead families, of whose home-life they made a part. Some of the boys the poet mentions by name, and not a few of their exploits he

records in "The Prelude" and in scattered notes. The kind dame with whom he lived was Anne Tyson, whom he always held in grateful memory for her motherly care. Her cottage was, and is, a grey stone dwelling, two stories high, in a side-street. An ash-tree stood before it, and through its garden sang the imprisoned brook. A sweet harmony bound together the hours in school with the unmeasured time of play and repose in Hawkshead homes, and of adventure in the open country; and the sunny seat "round the stone table under the dark pine," before Dame Tyson's cottage, was friendly alike "to studious or to festive hours." The happiness of the boys was due no less to natural advantages than to the wise liberality with which they were governed. In two minutes every boy could run from his dame's doorstep to the open fields, and at no great distance lay tracts of wood and moor. They ranged the open heights, trapping birds after dark, and hunting their eggs by day, "shouldering the naked crag." They crept forth before dawn on mysterious errands, and played late into the "soft starry nights," around the stone where an old woman, in the largest square, sold cakes and apples.

> Duly were our games
> Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed:
> No chair remained before the doors; the bench
> And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
> The labourer, and the old man who had sate
> A later lingerer; yet the revelry
> Continued and the loud uproar: at last,
> When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
> Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
> Feverish with weary joints and beating minds.*

In autumn they explored the hazel copses for nuts, and all the green summer they fished "by rocks and pools shut out from every star." From hill-top and meadow they flew their kites. In winter,

> when the sun
> Was set, and visible for many a mile
> The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,†

* "Prelude," II. 9.

† "Prelude," I. 425.

they skated through the darkness below the solitary cliffs till,

> with the din
> Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
> The leafless trees and every icy crag
> Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
> Into the tumult sent an alien sound
> Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
> Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
> The orange sky of evening died away.

Thus, the poet tells us, his sympathies were enlarged, and the daily range of visible things grew dear to him. He beheld familiar scenes change with the revolving year till they were not what they had been, and yet were mysteriously the same. He watched the expression of nature run on in endless variety while the majestic presence remained for ever. The pathos, the charm, and the power of nature showed themselves in this contrast. Monotony was as necessary as alteration to reveal the fulness of the eternal being and impress with awe the beholder's mind. The events that fill earth and sky with dramatic action forced themselves upon him in unsolicited invasion. His soul lay passive at first; then it awoke to observe actively, and at last to contemplate and respond. From the danger of being prematurely lured away from the commonplace he was saved by the lusty sports of his fellows; yet he was always so much unlike ordinary boys as to remind one of Rousseau's remark, "Thoughtless boys make commonplace men."

His acquaintance extended from high to low throughout the neighbourhood. In his comment upon the lines beginning "Nay, Traveller, rest," which were composed in part at school in Hawkshead, he tells us that his delight in a rocky peninsula on Windermere was so great that he led thither a youngster about his own age, an Irish boy, who was servant to an itinerant conjurer. His purpose was to witness the lad's pleasure in the prospect, and he was not disappointed. It was probably in the roads about Hawkshead that he observed

the old Cumberland beggar, whose helpless existence was an appeal to the charity of farmers' wives and passing horsemen riding in the pride of life. The Two Thieves, one a doting old man of more than ninety years, the other equally innocent, his grandson, aged three, were familiar figures in the village, where they performed an unconscious ministry of tender-heartedness. No one could behold them sinlessly committing their daily crimes, without reflecting on the nature of moral responsibility and making allowance for immaturity and decay. The original of the Pedlar, in the poem which at first went by that name and was later called "The Excursion," was a packman who occasionally lived at Hawkshead, with whom the boy Wordsworth "had frequent conversations upon what had befallen him, and what he had observed, during his wandering life." And, as he told a friend in after-years, they took much to one another, "as was natural." It is to this Pedlar that the following lines in "The Excursion" refer. They are but the beginning of a long and very attractive description, one of the most complete portraits in Wordsworth's gallery of worthies:

> We were tried Friends: amid a pleasant vale,
> In the antique market-village where was passed
> My school-time, an apartment he had owned,
> To which at intervals the Wanderer drew,
> And found a kind of home or harbour there.
> He loved me; from a swarm of rosy boys
> Singled out me, as he in sport would say,
> For my grave looks, too thoughtful for my years.
> As I grew up, it was my best delight
> To be his chosen comrade. Many a time,
> On holidays, we rambled through the woods:
> We sate—we walked; he pleased me with report
> Of things which he had seen; and often touched
> Abstrusest matter, reasonings of the mind
> Turned inwards; or at my request would sing
> Old songs, the product of his native hills.*

Another of his grown-up friends, living near Hawkshead, was the man to whom he attached himself one day

* I. 52.

when the common delusion of anglers caused him to believe that the farther from home the better the fishing. They worked their way to the sources of the Duddon, high in the mountains, and with small success. When the rain began to fall in torrents, the little fisherman, hungry and tired and wet, had to be carried home on his friend's back. The Jacobite and the Hanoverian, who figure in the same poem, were drawn from "two individuals who, by their several fortunes, were at different times driven to take refuge at the small and obscure town of Hawkshead on the skirt of these mountains. Their stories I had from the dear old dame with whom, as a schoolboy and afterwards, I lodged for the space of nearly ten years."*

In wilder flight, the boys rowed races on Windermere, played on the bowling-green, and ate strawberries and cream upon its farther shore, and, as their utmost extravagance, visited on horseback ancient landmarks far away, such as Furness Abbey. These were exceptional treats, exhausting their little weekly stipend, so that three-quarters of the year they "lived in penniless poverty." Plain and simple was the ordinary fare, and quiet were the usual pursuits. They had their "home amusements by the warm peat-fire," at evening, when a well-worn pack of cards did faithful service, while abroad

> Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
> Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth.

There are two ways of keeping a schoolboy busy, which is the first condition of his welfare. One is by rigorous discipline. The other and safer way is by alluring him to occupy himself in the pursuit of such happiness as is proper to his age and conducive to his development. These truisms were less commonly accepted in the eighteenth century than they are now, and there can be no doubt that Wordsworth's experience at Hawkshead was exceptional. The liberty he enjoyed

* Note to "The Excursion," dictated by Wordsworth to Miss Fenwick, about 1843.

could hardly be accorded even now in a large town. It was his good-fortune to be brought up in the country, under generous rules and among plain people. He learned at Hawkshead to value at their just worth the intelligence and morality of the poor. His judgment of people in humble life was unmarred either by sentimental exaggeration or unfeeling ignorance. He had lived among them, eating at their tables and playing with their children.

The consciousness of nature as a source of love and as a monitor came to him in moments when his being was invaded by a higher power than himself, taking tranquil possession of his senses, and unexpectedly of his affections too. A frequently recurring joy, if it be pure and bring no painful consequences, creates love for the source whence it is bestowed. So his heart became engaged more deeply with every sweeping return of these dear delights. The occasions of noticeable growth to which he directs our attention in the first book of "The Prelude" were moments when natural duty and childish fear met in his heart. In the following passage he relates how his moral consciousness was bound for ever, though by what might be called a mere illusion, to the ineluctable presences of nature:

> Ere I had told
> Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
> Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
> The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
> With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
> To range the open heights where woodcocks run
> Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
> Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
> That anxious visitation;—moon and stars
> Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
> And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
> That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell,
> In these night-wanderings, that a strong desire
> O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
> Which was the captive of another's toil
> Became my prey; and when the deed was done
> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me, and sounds

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> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod.*

This passage no doubt had a significance to Wordsworth beyond the grasp of those who would limit the origin of moral admonition to some historic "authority," or even to "the inner voice" of conscience. He believed, and probably for this reason treasured up this incident and gave it prominence, that the soul of the universe, uttering its august precepts through the clean air and the unsullied earth, speaks an intelligible language to the heart of man; because law and duty are the same for man and star and flower. Many instincts that we deem superstition are probably based on a vague apprehension of this truth. Many observances among primitive people bear witness to it. A much larger part of our impulses and restraints than we are commonly disposed to admit are due to an unconscious imitation of nature in her qualities analogous to human virtues such as rectitude and prudence. "Thanks," the poet wrote,

> Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
> Whether her fearless visitings, or those
> That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
> Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use
> Severer interventions, ministry
> More palpable, as best might suit her aim.†

Innumerable passages in his poetry developed this thought, now subtly and speculatively, as in "Peter Bell," now with eloquent assurance, as in the "Ode to Duty."

Another instance, almost crudely definite, may be cited to illustrate Wordsworth's belief, by no means vague, that nature exercised a moralizing influence over him in his boyhood. One summer evening, "led by her," he unloosed a boat and rowed away in the starlight:

> Lustily
> I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
> And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
> Went heaving through the water like a swan;

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† "Prelude," I. 306. ‡ *Ibid.*, I. 351.

When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.*

Call it ecstasy or the unconscious exercise of reason, the state of mind when such influxes of experience are possible is the requisite condition of growth in childhood. The soul is startled into self-consciousness, and then awed by becoming aware of the deep community that binds it to the life even of insensate things.

In "The Prelude" the poet preserves the distinction between the process by which intellectual life is kindled in the child and that by which "the Youth, who daily farther from the east must travel," and who is less splendidly ministered to, must win his way to a wise independence. The examples of the former which he gives in the first two books are of great significance, not merely because they are gleams of elusive truth in a twilight region of human experience. Wordsworth is almost, though not quite, unique in the reality of his recollections of these high places of childhood. Other poets have made their revelations, too. But he is unique

* "Prelude," I. 356.

in the degree of assurance with which he insists that these shadowy recollections

> Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
> Are yet a master light of all our seeing.

Not only to the psychology of childhood does he contribute these visions of the soul in lonely places, but his final word for the moral guidance of maturity is to search out the secrets of innocence and follow the voice of nature. The boys were thrown upon their own resources for entertainment as well as for intellectual advancement, "for, exclude," he writes,

> A little weekly stipend, and we lived
> Through three divisions of the quartered year
> In penniless poverty.

In this vacancy, nature deigned to work; and her operation was described in terms to which we are bound to attach a meaning none the less real because we cannot understand the process ourselves:

> Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
> And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
> And Souls of lonely places! can I think
> A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
> Such ministry, when ye through many a year
> Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
> On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
> Impressed, upon all forms, the characters
> Of danger or desire; and thus did make
> The surface of the universal earth,
> With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
> Work like a sea?*

These were tribute brought by nature to her child from earth and sky; but a finer harvest of delights was his also, when his mind, turning inward, became aware of a divine relationship not expressed through objects of sense. And when once this consciousness was awake in him, he faced about to the external world with a new power of apprehension, a feeling of oneness, so that

* "Prelude," I. 463.

> [He] held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure.*

And this he could do because he had felt an intellectual charm in the hallowed and pure motions of sense, a calm delight, he says, which surely must belong

> To those first-born affinities that fit
> Our new existence to existing things,
> And, in our dawn of being, constitute
> A bond of union between life and joy.†

Through pure and natural pleasures, whether half physical or altogether of the intelligence, "the common round of visible things" grew dear to him; his sympathies were enlarged; at last his soul could stand alone, unassisted by the "incidental charms" which first attached his heart to rural objects, and

> Nature, intervenient till this time
> And secondary, now at length was sought
> For her own sake.

Alone or with a friend he often walked, before school hours, the full round of Esthwaite Water, "five miles of pleasant wandering," exulting in fellowship with nature's beauty, finding kindred moods in nature's morning face, and storing up "an obscure sense of possible sublimity," whereto he might aspire, as to an unattainable goal of his growing faculties. His liberty extended to choice of books. Such liberty Coleridge, too, enjoyed, and to this Wordsworth refers, when he rejoices for them both, that they have escaped the interference of system-mongers, with their surveillance, their examinations, their artificial standards. Among his treasures was a volume of "The Arabian Nights," and when he discovered that this was but one of four, he and another boy hoarded their joint savings to buy them; but after several months their resolution failed. His taste was for romances, legends, fictions of love, and tales of warlike adventure. They corresponded to dumb yearnings,

* "Prelude," I. 562. † *Ibid.*, I. 555.

hidden appetites, and from this instinctive reaching out after the wonderful he draws the inference that

> Our simple childhood sits upon a throne
> That hath more power than all the elements.*

Something divine is indicated by this faculty, which enables a child to sweep away the objects of sense and create out of its own mind a world not altogether unreal. The poet cannot guess

> what this tells of Being past,
> Nor what it augurs of the life to come;

he can only infer that the mind which can build without regard to space or matter may itself be independent of time, eternal in self-activity.

The gift of verse is not granted to all poetic souls. Yet through some undiscovered law there is doubtless a connection between the power to think synthetically and a tendency to rhythmic expression. Thoughts that cohere with nature's order flow of their own motion in musical numbers. A poet bred in a civilized community can hardly help observing the advantages of verse as an appropriate mould for his deepest and most natural thoughts. The examples he finds in books are to him discoveries of the utmost importance. And thus we see Wordsworth at the age of ten rejoicing in the possession of a new faculty, or rather, a new facility:

> Twice five years
> Or less I might have seen, when first my mind
> With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
> Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
> For their own *sakes*, a passion and a power.†

This was his introduction to the world of art, and he was quick to recognize its identity with the one already familiar to his dauntless tread. He who has been intimate, he declared, with living nature, receives from verse

> Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
> From the great Nature that exists in works
> Of mighty Poets. Visionary power
> Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
> Embodied in the mystery of words.‡

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* "Prelude," V. 507. † *Ibid.*, V. 552. ‡ *Ibid.*, V. 593.

Before leaving Hawkshead Wordsworth composed a poem of many hundred lines, from which, as he told a friend in his old age, most of the thoughts and images were to be found dispersed through his other writings. Its conclusion, which suggested itself to him as he and his companions were resting in a boat on Coniston Water under a row of magnificent sycamores, has been preserved, with some alterations, in the following verses:

Dear native regions, I foretell,
From what I feel at this farewell,
That, wheresoe'er my steps may tend,
And whensoe'er my course shall end,
If in that hour a single tie
Survive of local sympathy,
My soul will cast the backward view,
The longing look alone on you.

Thus, while the Sun sinks down to rest
Far in the regions of the west,
Though to the vale no parting beam
Be given, not one memorial gleam,
A lingering light he fondly throws
On the dear hills where first he rose.

In October, 1787, Wordsworth was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, of which his uncle, the Reverend Mr. Cookson, had been a fellow. Having a year's start of the other freshmen in mathematics, he neglected that branch of learning, but read classic authors according to his fancy, and Italian poetry. A few of the letters written by him and his sister between 1787 and 1791 exist, and are of great interest, but the chief source of knowledge concerning him for these three years and four months is "The Prelude." In spite of certain expressions of discontent, or rather want of sympathy, with Cambridge, it is evident that he really enjoyed his life at the university and benefited by it, though it is no doubt true, as he says, that the discipline was not severe enough to make him put forth his utmost energy in scholastic pursuits, while, on the other hand, he missed the opportunities for solitary wanderings and quiet

observation which he had enjoyed at Hawkshead. There was considerable intellectual ferment at Cambridge shortly before and during his time of residence. Eddies from the great world-current of rationalism, the so-called Enlightenment, stirred the university from time to time, as is evident from the number of heresy trials that took place there. Such indications of independent thinking, accompanied by the hazarding of livelihood and reputation, show that the place was not altogether stagnant. If Wordsworth had been inclined to purely scholastic pursuits, particularly in theology or mathematics, he need not have complained that the atmosphere of Cambridge was uncongenial. His brother Christopher, who followed him from Hawkshead in October, 1791, certainly did not find it so. The latter was a member of Trinity College. His diary, beginning October 9, 1793, is full of attendance at lectures, conferences with tutors, conversations and debates on intellectual subjects with fellow-students, among whom was Coleridge, exercise taken with a view to mental hygiene, wide reading, and computation of the number of hours devoted to study. The following are the records of two typical days:*

"*Thurs.*, 17 [*Oct.*, 1793].—Rose to chapel. Read till one. Trigonometry (plane). In the afternoon lounged in the library. Walked with Reynolds. Drank tea at home. Read Tweddell's Panegyric on Locke. Proceeded in my syllabus of Trigonometry. Read part of Æschylus' Seven against Thebes. Bilsborrow saw the Letter in which Johnson offers Dr. Darwin £1,000 for his *Ζωονομια*, without having ever seen it. Dr. D. confesses it in his Botanic Garden, etc.; he propounds many opinions which he does not himself believe. Hayley, Bilsborrow says, is employed upon a life of Milton."

"*Wednesday*, 23.—Chapel. A Latin declamation brought to me. All morning spent in choosing a subject, finding my opponent, going to the Dean, procuring books, etc."

He was attending Wollaston's lectures and reading Euclid, plane and spherical trigonometry, mechanics,

* Christopher Wordsworth: "Social Life at the English Universities in the Eighteenth Century."

astronomy, Locke, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, not to mention Boswell's "Johnson," *The Spectator*, and the early poetical ventures of his brother and of Coleridge.

Christopher Wordsworth manifested even in his youth the qualities that made him ultimately a successful Churchman and a great academic figure. He was naturally fond of reading, and not averse from hard study for its own sake or for the sake of distinction. He was docile and orthodox, and his social inclinations were strong. The ambitions which appear to have been the mainspring of his life were decidedly practical. It is hardly necessary to say that young men of this type are the round pegs for whom the round holes of preferment are intended. If his brother had been like him, or, on the other hand, had been content to enjoy the easy tasks required and the harmless pleasures tolerated by the college and university authorities, we should have heard no complaint. But he asked of Cambridge what it is to be feared no university ever gave continuously and as a matter of course—namely, a great stimulus to the emotions, coinciding with a steady advance in knowledge and intellectual strength.

A still more instructive inference from these glimpses of Cambridge life is that the poet may have been imbued during his residence at the university with the radical opinions in religion and politics for which it has been commonly supposed that his sojourn in France was responsible. He could hardly have escaped the influence which was to be, within a year or two, very effective with Coleridge, who, without going to France, became as much a radical as Wordsworth. It was in part, no doubt, Wordsworth's sympathy with this element of Cambridge life, an element discountenanced by the authorities and practically ineffective, that kept him from feeling at home. A reflexion of his state of mind may be seen in a suppressed passage of "The Prelude," dating from 1804 or earlier, which has been printed on p. 91 of Professor de Selincourt's *variorum* edition. The poet, addressing the university, exclaims:

> Wear not the vizard of the ancient time
> Upon a modern face, fling to the ground
> Thy monkish Caul; and run no more abroad,
> A greybeard Masquerader, dizen'd out
> In Superstition's cast-off garb.

All that is certain, however, is that he held himself quietly aloof. He had grown up to be his own judge and master. Since his father's death he had been restrained by no authority save the mild rules of Hawkshead. He had lived much alone and out of doors, subject to a grander discipline, and seeking nobler rewards than those of any school. His heart, which had expanded generously, as we have seen, in the society of other boys and of simple rustics, closed upon its tender secrets in the unaccustomed air of a larger place. An uneasy wonder, not real admiration, took the place of those deep satisfactions, those unquestioning acceptances, that filled his mind among his native mountains. He half regretted, half cherished, the consciousness of being different from the young men about him, and of being out of sympathy with the spirit of the university. It was not merely disdain that taught him to feel he "was not for that place."

Wordsworth's great autobiographical poem, which towards the close of the second book becomes deeper and slower in its movement, bursts at the opening of the third into a rapid narrative, and streams along with lively interest. He records with Chaucerian simplicity his arrival on the coach, the aspect of the many-towered town, his fresh sensations, his important visits to tutor and tailor, and the welcome given him by old Hawkshead boys, "now hung round with honour and importance":

> I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed
> Delighted through the motley spectacle;
> Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
> Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:
> Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
> A northern villager.*

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* "Prelude," III. 29.

He occupied rooms, since demolished, in the beautiful First Court, which were over the kitchens, and looked out upon the chapel of Trinity. From his bedroom window he

> could behold
> The antechapel, where the statue stood
> Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.*

The routine of lectures and examinations failed from the very first to awaken his interest. He was untouched by the excessive hopes, small jealousies, and triumphs, of student life. Yet he was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts about his future worldly maintenance, which depressed him amid the crowd of eager aspirants. And then he did for himself what he has since done for thousands—he strengthened his heart by communing with nature. It is a hackneyed phrase, but to him it represented a most real and important experience. As he paced along the level fields of Cambridgeshire, far from the grander scenes that had inspired his boyhood, he felt even there an uplifting of his mind and a sense that all was well—felt what independent solaces were his

> To mitigate the injurious sway of place
> Or circumstance.

He looked for universal things, called on them to be his teachers, gave a moral life even to the loose stones that covered the highway, "saw them feel, or linked them to some feeling." "The great mass," he says,

> Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
> That I beheld respired with inward meaning.

He flung himself upon nature, fearing that she might not be the same in these less lovely regions, and found her ready as ever to soothe and exalt. He could then return and look unabashed at the memorials of intellectual greatness that admonished him from their honourable

* "Prelude," III. 59.

niches in college gateways or their gilded frames in college halls. What wonder if he held himself somewhat apart from his companions! It was not easy for him to come down to their level, and evidently in his first year he acted strangely. They thought him mad, and so, he says, he was indeed,

> If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
> By poets in old time, or higher up
> By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,
> May in these tutored days no more be seen
> With undisordered sight.*

But as proof that his vision of Oneness was no blear illusion, he asserts that at this time his analytic powers were keen and active. He perceived not only similitudes, but differences. He might have said, with William Blake, "every Minute Particular is holy." He is anxious to avert the charge that he was too attentive to generalities, and therefore incapable of that direct sense of the actual and individual which is common to men. He is concerned to show that in so far, at least, he was not unaffected by the logical severity which was supposed to dominate Cambridge thought.

Gradually he adapted himself more to the ideals of the place, and began to take part in its enjoyments. His heart, he tells us, was social, and if a throng was near, that way he inclined. He welcomed new acquaintances, made friends, sauntered, talked, drifted about the streets and walks, read lazily in trivial books, rode horseback, and sailed boisterously on the river. With no one did he share his deeper thoughts. He scarcely gave them definite form in his own mind, and made no attempt to express them in writing. Now and then he forced himself to work at the appointed tasks, and felt a faint hope of success. We must not suppose that he was really as neglectful of classical studies as "The Prelude" might lead us to think. In later life he showed evidence of fairly wide and accurate reading in classical authors, and prepared his son for college. And yet, for him, as

* "Prelude," III. 150.

indeed for many minds, there could be no complete absorption in work unless imagination led the way. And imagination, he says, slept, though not utterly. Had he been more mature in scholarship, or more experienced, he might have been moved, as Goethe was moved, by the contrast between active life and the systems of speculative idealism which were echoing on their way from Berkeley to Kant. Or he might have been thus early aroused, as Lessing and Voltaire were aroused, to shoulder his responsibility in the warfare between rationalism and mysticism. It is to sceptical impulses, perhaps, that he refers when he mentions with annoyance

> a treasonable growth
> Of indecisive judgments, that impaired
> And shook the mind's simplicity.*

The English universities in his day were not, in a broad sense, national institutions. They were organs of the Church of England. Much of their mediæval character as groups of religious houses still survived. The clergy were conspicuous in almost all high academic posts, and a steady circulation between fellowships and church livings in the gift of colleges was maintained. In academic groups religious and political doubt were treated with the disgust due to filial ingratitude. Wordsworth, if he doubted, was too simple-hearted to resent this feeling and to realize its impertinence.

After all, the most memorable pages of the third book of "The Prelude" are those which recall the deep floods of reverence that flowed into the young poet's soul when he remembered his illustrious predecessors, Newton, Chaucer, Spenser, Milton. In those precincts he could not move and sleep and wake untouched by their ennobling influence. "I could not lightly pass," he says,

> Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
> Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
> That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.†

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* "Prelude," III. 211.

† *Ibid.*, III. 261.

In the neighbouring village of Trumpington he "laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade." In lines that exquisitely imitate the music of his great Brother, Englishman, and Friend, he records how he hailed

> Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
> With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace.

Milton, "soul awful," he says, "I seemed to see"

> Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
> Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth—
> A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
> Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
> And conscious step of purity and pride.

One of his acquaintances occupied Milton's rooms in Christ's College, and there, on a dark winter evening, betrayed by enthusiasm, he poured out libations to his memory,

> till pride
> And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
> Never excited by the fumes of wine
> Before that hour, or since,*

and in fear of being too late for evening prayers he ran ostrich-like through the streets, with flowing gown, and, shouldering up his surplice with careless ostentation, hurried through the antechapel of St. John's.

Those mighty dead roused his enthusiasm, but through his own fault, as he admits, failed to stir in him

> A fervent love of rigorous discipline.

What he missed was some compelling force which should break the light composure of his easy spirits and bend him to a task demanding all his efforts. He did not slight his books, but he knew full well that he possessed powers that might have been exerted to great purpose had the passion for study been awakened in him. Other passions already filled his mind, passions engendered by crystalline rivers and solemn heights, lovely forms that left less space for learning's soberer visions.

* "Prelude," III. 275-321.

Out of these regrets he framed, later, an ideal of a place of learning "whose studious aspect" should have bent him down "to instantaneous service," a place where the gregarious instincts should be turned to the highest account in a generous co-operation, where knowledge should be prized for its own sake, where youth, under the impulse of a truly religious zeal, should stand abashed

> Before antiquity and steadfast truth
> And strong book-mindedness; and over all
> A healthy sound simplicity should reign,
> A seemly plainness, name it what you will,
> Republican or pious.*

He fancied that the universities possessed such a character in the Renaissance,

> When all who dwelt within these famous walls
> Led in abstemiousness a studious life,†

when princes froze at matins and peasants' sons begged their way from remote villages, journeying to these centres of learning "with ponderous folios in their hands," and illustrious scholars,

> Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
> Bucer, Erasmus, or Melanchthon, read
> Before the doors or windows of their cells
> By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.

The glorious dream is by no means vain. It may yet be realized, and Wordsworth was right in thinking that poverty, compulsory or voluntary, with the plainness that poverty entails, is one of the first conditions of its fulfilment. The religion of such a place, upon which it will depend wholly for dignity, grace, integrity, and inspiration, must, however, be a faith in those things which are recognized by the best spirits of the times as the supremely good things. A mediæval or a seventeenth-century type of religion will not vivify a modern university. Nowhere is there a more disastrous effect on morality than in a college or school whose real religion

* "Prelude," III. 394. † *Ibid.*, III. 446-478.

does not heartily support its ceremonial of worship. In a vein of fervent satire Wordsworth comments on the practice of compulsory chapel services, which the younger members of his college attended unwillingly and the older members very irregularly or not at all. "Be wise," he says,

> Ye Presidents and Deans, and, till the spirit
> Of ancient times revive, and youth be trained
> At home in pious service, to your bells
> Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
> Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
> And your officious doings bring disgrace
> On the plain steeples of our English Church,
> Whose worship, 'mid remotest village trees,
> Suffers for this.*

All authority, he held, was weakened by the irreverence produced by this forced attendance, and even Science was "smitten thence with an unnatural taint."

He was impatient, too, of the narrow range of scholastic studies. Modern subjects attracted him, and he spent much time reading in branches not recognized as part of the official course. He learned Italian. His private tutor, Agostino Isola, a native of Milan, whence he had fled for political reasons, had taught Gray in his time. Isola's granddaughter, Emma, was adopted, or at least brought up in part, by Charles and Mary Lamb. Wordsworth was never a discursive reader. More intense study would have suited him better, and he does indeed mention, with minute and curious detail, the way in which geometry strengthened and elevated his mind. From the same source he says he drew

> A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense
> Of permanent and universal sway,

and thus a recognition of God, which comforted him with transcendent peace. He craved discipline and insight, not experience, and so, in the large part of "The Prelude" devoted to his education, few books—the doors to experience—are mentioned, even in the canto

* "Prelude," III. 409.

entitled "Books." It is significant, too, that almost the only books he mentions in connection with this time—and with great delight—are "The Arabian Nights" and "Don Quixote," which pleased him, evidently, by their extravagance and fancifulness, more than for any outlook on reality they offered. His very considerable acquaintance with books of travel was gained later, perhaps as a relief from too much concentration, and because he had, as he said, a passion for wandering.

After the manner of undergraduates, he derived much amusement from the oddities of his seniors. "Rich pastime," he found it, to observe "the grave Elders, men unscoured, grotesque in character," with so little to do that they fell into random and strange practices. The employment of what is termed "academic leisure" creates bewilderment in the young. This is especially the case when apparent idleness is not disconnected with academic distinction. Wordsworth was perhaps more tender than his fellow-students in his criticism of the old dons, for he remembered the aged shepherds of the hills, and found that, though different in expression, the eccentricities of age were essentially the same in Cambridge as in Hawkshead. But he scourges the system which encouraged a rapid decline into uselessness; and thinking of the "old humorists" who sat at the college high tables in his youth, he bursts into an indignant passage.

At the end of his first college year he had no home to go to, and turned eagerly towards Hawkshead. His old dame welcomed him with almost a mother's pride. He re-entered her cottage with the assurance of a son. Language failed him in which to express the complex feelings that filled his heart on this occasion, as he recognized a hundred once familiar objects, beholding everything in duplicate, its present aspect mingling strangely with its remembered form. The richest part of this experience is seeing one's old self peeping unexpectedly at its new playfellow. No one can communicate to anyone else more than the barest outline of what the first home-coming after a long absence means to an

DAME TYSON'S COTTAGE, HAWKSHEAD

From a photograph by Walmsley

imaginative person, and although the fourth book of "The Prelude" is probably the most successful attempt to do so ever made, the poet asks as in despair:

> Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts
> Have felt, and every man alive can guess?

He greeted the rooms, the court, the garden of Dame Tyson's dwelling, and the unruly brook boxed up in its paved channel, which was an emblem of his own mountain origin and recent restraint. He hailed old friends at their work, or on the roads, or across fields. He felt embarrassed among his old schoolmates because of his fashionable dress. He took his place with delight at the domestic table, and, after a day of many sensations, laid him down in the lowly accustomed bed whence he "had heard the wind roar and the rain beat hard," and oft

> Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
> The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
> Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;
> Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro
> In the dark summit of the waving tree
> She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.*

After this first riot of boyish spirits the ferment of poetry revived in him, and, accompanied by an old favourite, a rough hill terrier, he wandered in the country, "harassed with the toil of verse," rushing forward boyishly to pat the dog when some lovely image rose full-formed in the song, and putting on the air of a mere saunterer if the animal gave warning of approaching passengers. By contrast with the fens of Cambridgeshire, the lakes and hills seemed more beautiful than ever. That he had felt their beauty a year before, when as yet he had never lived outside the circle of their power, is proof of his inborn distinction of spirit, for not every son of the mountains is aware of the majesty that surrounds him. Now to this original realization was added the result of comparison. He recognized the peculiar appeal of these old haunts which

* "Prelude," IV. 87.

had once seemed a whole world to him. He felt, with pensive sympathy, that even this beauty must be transient.

With clearer knowledge than of old, he was now able to read, also, the characters of his former companions, the dalesmen and their children. He found a freshness in human life. He observed with increased respect the daily occupations which he really loved. They had gained dignity in the eyes of one who had been puzzling vainly over the mystery of endowed leisure. The peaceful scene,

> Changed like a garden in the heat of spring
> After an eight days' absence,

filled him with surprise. Many things which before had seemed natural now began to take their places in the order of conventional society. He saw with his own unclouded eye of childhood, and at the same time with the eye of the world. In this first long vacation many a day was

> Spent in a round of strenuous idleness.

He flung himself into the innocent gaieties of country life, "feast, and dance, and public revelry." This course he afterwards, taking himself strictly to task, regretted. Like Rousseau, Wordsworth believed that the development of the child should be held back until adolescence, and that then, in a few crowded years or even months, the reasoning powers should be subjected to rigorous discipline, the imagination enriched, and purposes ennobled. He therefore looked back with some disapproval on the waste of many golden hours at that important time. For, he declared, except some casual knowledge of character or life, he gained no real experience;

> Far better had it been to exalt the mind
> By solitary study, to uphold
> Intense desire through meditative peace.*

Yet one hour of profound insight set the balance straight. It was the hour of his baptism with the fire of poesy,

* "Prelude," IV. 304.

an hour memorable in his life and in the history of literature. It was the supreme religious moment of his life, the point when solitude closed in on all sides of him, and his being stood cut off for the first time from every other human soul, distinct in conscious self-hood; the point, too, when by this very isolation his soul lay bare to divine influence and he communed with God, submissive to the heavenly voice. He then accepted—he could not help accepting—the call of a power beyond his control. And from that time his faculties were released. The incident does not admit of paraphrase, and must be read in his own words, the momentous conclusion being:

> bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit.*

Penrith is nearly thirty miles northeast of Hawkshead. The shortest route between them lies over Kirkstone Pass and along Brother's Water and Ullswater. At the halfway point the most beautiful little beck in the whole Lake Country comes tumbling out of Dovedale, from "the springs of Dove," and then winds quietly past "one green field" until it finds rest in Brother's Water. An ancient manor-house or superior farmhouse, Hartsop Hall, seated beside the brook, commands a prospect of the upper part of the vale. It seems likely that this is the scene and that the summer of 1788 was the time of the experience which is exquisitely idealized in the Lucy poems, written in Germany more than ten years later. I am convinced that these five poems, and less obviously four or five others, record, in the delicate distillation of memory, a real experience of youthful love and bewildering grief. The maiden whom Wordsworth loved was a child. He loved her with the ennobling passion of a high-minded boy. She died, but her image survived in his heart.

There is nothing in "The Prelude" or in any published letters of the Wordsworth family to indicate that the

* "Prelude," IV, 309-338.

young collegian spent any considerable part of this first long vacation with his sister, or elsewhere than at Hawkshead. But it is, of course, extremely probable that he visited her at Penrith, to which his good long legs would easily carry him in a day. He had been with her before going to Cambridge, in October, 1787. She had bravely helped to get him ready for the journey, and then fallen back in mute despair into a lonely life. She was made to feel her dependence upon her grandparents and her uncle Christopher. Her duties in the mercer shop were uncongenial, and were not lightened by much sympathy. Her grandmother's eye was on her there, and she could not indulge her love of reading. The grandfather was ill and cross. There was not in all England a spirit naturally more gladsome than Dorothy Wordsworth's, nor a constitution that called so eagerly as hers did for space and exercise and change. Two passions possessed her wholly—love of nature and love of her brothers; and at sixteen she was cut off from both nature and her brothers. Her mobile apprehension had to accommodate its pace to the torpid current of events in a small market-town. Her tameless enthusiasm was checked by the disapproval of a commonplace family. There exist two letters which she wrote from Penrith to a girl friend, Jane Pollard, of Halifax, before William went to Cambridge. They are remarkable productions for a child of fifteen. The handwriting is that of a person accustomed to rapid composition. It is neither unformed nor "commercial." The style is singularly correct, and flexible enough to express a wide range of anger, affection, and playfulness. The words flow as from a pent-up fountain. Never was there a heart more eager to love. It is worth remarking as a distinguishing trait and a noble one, that, while craving a chance to bestow her love, she expresses little anxiety about being loved. Possibly some abatement from what she writes about her gloom and its causes should be made on the ground that she takes an artistic pleasure in describing them. In the first letter, which is dated merely "Sunday evening," but apparently was

written at Penrith in the summer of 1787, excusing herself for negligence, she says:

"On Thursday night I began writing, but my brother William was sitting by me, and I could not help talking with him till it was too late to finish. . . . I might perhaps have employed an hour or two in writing to you, but I have so few, so very few, to pass with my brothers that I could not leave them. You know how happy I am in their company. I do not now want a friend who will share with me my distresses. I do not now pass half my time alone. I can bear the ill-nature of all my relations, for the affection of my brothers consoles me in all my griefs; but how soon, alas! shall I be deprived of this consolation, and how soon shall I then become melancholy, even more melancholy than before! They are just the boys I could wish them, they are so affectionate and so kind to me as makes me love them more and more every day. William and Christopher are very clever boys, at least so they appear in the partial eyes of a sister. No doubt I am partial and see virtues in them that by everybody else will pass unnoticed. John, who is to be the sailor, has a most excellent heart. He is not so bright as either William or Christopher, but he has very good common sense, and is well calculated for the profession he has chosen. Richard, the eldest, I have seen. He is equally affectionate and good, but is far from being as clever as William, but I have no doubt of his succeeding in his business, for he is very diligent and far from being dull. He only spent a night with us. Many a time have William, John, Christopher and myself shed tears together, tears of the bitterest sorrow. We all of us each day feel more sensibly the loss we sustained when we were deprived of our parents, and each day do we receive fresh insults. . . . Our fortunes will, I fear, be very small, as Lord Lonsdale will most likely only pay a very small part of his debt, which is £4,700. My uncle Kit (who is our guardian) having said many disrespectful things of him, and having always espoused the cause of the Duke of Norfolk, has incensed him so much that I fear we shall feel through life the effects of his imprudence. We shall, however, have sufficient to educate my brothers. John, poor fellow! says that he shall have occasion for very little, £200 will be sufficient to fit him out, and he should wish William to have the rest for his education, as he has

a wish to be a lawyer if his health will permit, and it will be very expensive. We shall have, I believe, about £600 apiece, if Lord Lonsdale does not pay. It is but very little, but it will be quite enough for my brothers' education, and after they are once put forward in the world there is little doubt of their succeeding, and for me while they live I shall never want a friend. Oh, Jane! when they have left me I shall be quite unhappy. I shall long more ardently than ever for you, my dearest, dearest friend. We have been told thousands of times that we were liars, but we treat such behaviour with the contempt it deserves. We always finish our conversations, which generally take a melancholy train, with wishing we had a father and a home. Oh, Jane! I hope it may be long ere you experience the loss of your parents, but till you feel that loss you will never know how dear to you your sisters are."

The uncle mentioned in this letter, Christopher Crackanthorpe Cookson, was a brother of the poet's mother. On his own mother's death, in 1792, he took the surname of Crackanthorpe instead of Cookson, and became Christopher Crackanthorpe Crackanthorpe.

The second letter bears the Penrith stamp, and was evidently written late in the summer or early in the autumn of 1787. It is dated merely "Monday evening, 10 o'clock."

"Yesterday morning I parted from the kindest and most affectionate of brothers. I cannot paint to you my distress at their departure. For a few hours I was absolutely miserable. A thousand tormenting fears rushed upon me—the approaching winter, the ill-nature of my grandfather and uncle Christopher, the little probability there is of my soon again seeing my youngest brother, and still less likelihood of my revisiting my Halifax friends, in quick succession filled my mind. . . . [She tells how she has to look for chances to write, avoiding her grandmother's watchful eye. There is something merely romantic, but also perhaps something morbid and overstrained, in all this.] A gentleman of my father's intimate acquaintance, who is not worth less than two or three thousand pounds a year, and who always professed himself to be the real friend of my father, refused to pay a bill of £700 to his children with-

out considerable reductions. . . . I am sure as long as my brothers have a farthing in their pockets I shall never want. My brother William goes to Cambridge in October, but he will be at Penrith before his departure. He wishes very much to be a lawyer, if his health will permit, but he is troubled with violent headaches and a pain in his side, but I hope they will leave him in a little while. You must not be surprised if you see him at Halifax in a short time. I think he will not be able to call there on his way to Cambridge, as my uncle William [the Rev. William Cookson] and a young gentleman who is going to the same college will accompany him. When I wrote to you last I had some faint hopes that he might have been permitted to stay with me till October. You may guess how much I was mortified and vexed at his being obliged to go away. I absolutely dislike my uncle Kit. He never speaks a pleasant word to one, and behaves to my brother William in a particularly ungenerous manner. . . . I have a very pretty collection of books from my brothers, which they have given me. I will give you a catalogue. I have the Iliad and Odyssey, Pope's Works, Fielding's Works, Hayley's poems, Gil Blas, Dr. Gregory's letters to his daughters; and my brother Richard intends sending me Shakespeare's plays and the Spectator. I have also Milton's works, Dr. Goldsmith's poems, etc. . . . I am determined to do a great deal now both in French and English. My grandmother sits in the shop in the afternoons, and by working particularly hard for one hour I think I may read the next without being discovered. I rise pretty early in the morning, so I hope in time to have perused them all. I am at present reading the Iliad, and like it very much. My brother William read part of it."

After these formidable projects it is pleasant to read a feminine description of her looks: "I am so little, and wish to appear as girlish as possible; I wear my hair curled about my face in light curls frizzed at the bottom and turned at the ends."

In another letter, written late in the autumn, occurs a more particular description:

"My grandmother is now gone to bed, and I am quite alone. Imagine me sitting in my bed-gown, my hair out of curl and hanging about my face, with a small candle

beside me, and my whole person the picture of poverty (as it always is in a bed-gown), and you will then see your friend Dorothy. It is after 11 o'clock. I begin to find myself very sleepy, and I have my hair to curl, so I must bid my very dear friend a Good-night."

One perceives that, after all, "poverty," a dragon grandmother, and the dreadful necessity of writing letters at eleven o'clock at night, were not without a certain romantic delightfulness to this young lady.

A few weeks later, as the autumn evenings lengthened, she wrote to her friend with bitterer feeling:

"I often wish for you. I think how happy we could be together notwithstanding the cold insensibility of my grandmother and the ill-nature of my grandfather. . . . . I often go to the Cowpers and like Miss D. C. better than ever. I wish my uncle and she would marry. [She means her favourite uncle, the Rev. William Cookson, who did marry Miss Cowper, on October 17, 1788.]. . . I am now writing beside that uncle I so much love. He is a friend to whom next to my aunt I owe the greatest obligations. Every day gives me new proofs of his affection, and every day I like him better than I did before. I am now with him two hours every morning, from nine till eleven. I then read and write French, and learn arithmetic. When I am a good arithmetician I am to learn geography. I sit in his room when we have a fire. . . . I had my brother William with me for three weeks. I was very busy during his stay, preparing him for Cambridge, so that I had very little leisure, and what I had you may be sure I wished to spend with him. I have heard from my brother William since his arrival at Cambridge. He spent three or four days at York upon the road."

In her next letter to Miss Pollard, dated Friday, December 17, she refers to a copy of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems, published the year before. William "had read it, and admired many of the pieces very much, and promised to get it for me at the book-club, which he did." She found the Address to a Louse "very comical," and the one to a Mountain Daisy "very pretty." But she longs for liberty.

"Oh, Jane, Jane," she cries, "that I could but see you! how happy, how very happy, we should be! I really think that for an hour after our meeting there would nothing pass betwixt us but tears of joy, fits of laughter, and unconnected exclamations, such as 'Oh Jane!' 'Oh Dolly!' It is now seven months since we parted. What a long time! We have never been separated so long for these nine years. I shall soon have been here a year, and in two years more I am determined I will come to Halifax if I cannot sooner, but I hope my uncle William is now on the road to preferment. If I do not flatter myself without having any right, he will soon be married. I must certainly in a little time go to see him, and then I shall visit Halifax. . . I daresay *you* look forward with pleasure to the approaching season; I am sorry to say I cannot. Believe me, my dear Jane, I wish you many merry evenings and agreeable dances. I shall often think of you, and flatter myself that on Christmas Day, which you know is my birthday, you will cast a melancholy thought upon your friend Dorothy. . . . The assemblies are indeed begun, but they are no amusement for me. There was one on Wednesday evening, where there were a number of ladies, but alas! only six gentlemen, so two ladies were obliged to dance together."

In a letter to Miss Pollard, written apparently in January, 1788, she mentions the recent sudden death of her grandfather. More than once, writing of her brothers—Richard in London, William at Cambridge, Christopher at Hawkshead, and John, sailing now to the West Indies, now to the East—she exclaims, "How we are squandered abroad!" Her ardent nature yearned for affection and intimacy. At last her uncle William married Miss Cowper, and was appointed rector of Forncett, near Long Stretton, in Norfolk. Thither they went in December, 1788, taking the happy girl with them. Writing to Jane from Norwich, where they stayed a few days, in December, 1788, before settling at Forncett, she says: "I have now nothing left to wish for on my own account. Every day gives me fresh proofs of my uncle and aunt's goodness. . . . My happiness was very unexpected. When my uncle told me, I was almost mad with joy. I cried and laughed

alternately. It was in a walk with him that it was communicated to me."

On the way they had stopped for a few hours at Cambridge, where she greatly admired the buildings, and walked with delight in the college courts and groves. She thought it odd to see the "smart powdered heads" of the students, "with black caps like helmets, only that they had a square piece of wood at the top, and gowns something like those that clergymen wear," but she considered the costume "exceedingly becoming." She saw her brother there.

For about four years Forncett rectory was to be her home, until what she called "the day of my felicity, the day on which I am to find a home under the same roof as my brother." She was so happy with her uncle and aunt, and so busy gardening, raising poultry, teaching the country children, visiting the sick, and reading, that only one desire was left unsatisfied—the desire to be with William. This longing, however, grew until it drove every other thought from her mind. She wrote about him and to him with the warmth and abandonment of a lover. Her occasional journeys to the North, to Halifax, Sockburn, and Penrith, only revived his memory. Her visits to Windsor, where her uncle was occasionally on duty as a canon of the Chapel Royal, and where she saw many grand people and was introduced to the royal family, only increased her admiration and solicitude for the plain and no doubt rustic collegian.

He who has not lingered in the Lake country till far into the autumn cannot realize the meaning of Wordsworth's lines at the opening of the sixth book of "The Prelude," in which he relates that he turned his face

> from the coves and heights
> Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern;
> Quitted, not loth, the mild magnificence
> Of calmer lakes and louder streams.

The golden bracken and the voice of full-fed streams are nature's signals to depart. They remind the visitor that

summer is gone and winter is at hand. Wordsworth, as one not yet fitted to dwell uninterruptedly in this retreat, went back willingly enough to Cambridge. But though refreshed and cheerful, he withdrew now for the first time in his life into something like solitude. He read copiously, but without a settled plan. He troubled himself very little about the prescribed studies, except from a sense of duty to his friends and kindred. He knew he was a poet, and was calmly happy in the present sense of joy and the certain anticipation of future power. In those days he first dared to hope that he might leave behind him some monument "which pure hearts should reverence." The analogy with Milton is evident, and perhaps Milton's example gave him courage. He declares that

> the dread awe
> Of mighty names was softened down and seemed
> Approachable, admitting fellowship
> Of modest sympathy.

Such boldness did the *alma mater* of Spenser, Marlowe, Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Milton, Crashaw, Herrick, Herbert, Cowley, and Gray, instil into her nursling. All winter long it was his habit to walk in the groves of his college in the evening till the nine o'clock bell summoned him to go indoors. The human beauty of Cambridge, her peculiar blending of quiet, unobtrusive, and half-rural simplicity with some of the noblest monuments of Gothic architecture to be found in the world, charmed him in spite of himself. His three sonnets, "Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge," are sufficient evidence that he was neither unappreciative nor ungrateful. And no doubt his mind, "in hours of fear or grovelling thought," sought refuge in the memory of that "glorious work of fine intelligence."

Yet we have only two poems, originally one, but printed as two, of which it is known with certainty that he composed them at Cambridge. These are the "Lines written while sailing in a Boat at Evening" and the three additional stanzas entitled "Remembrance

* "Prelude," VI. 59.

of Collins," in which he has arbitrarily changed the scene to the Thames.

His second summer vacation, that of 1789, was spent in the north again. He explored Dovedale in Derbyshire, and some of the valleys in western Yorkshire and hidden tracts of his own native region. Between these wanderings he was blessed, he tells us, with a joy "that seemed another morn risen on mid-noon," the presence of his sister, from whom he had been so long separated that "she seemed a gift then first bestowed." At their age time had wrought many changes in both of them, all tending to make them more interesting in each other's eyes. She had returned from Forncett to Penrith or to Penrith and Halifax for the summer. She was now old enough to take some of the freedom from household restraints which she had longed for, and under her brother's charge she visited the many romantic scenes within easy reach of Penrith. Side by side they strolled along the banks of Emont, and climbed among the ruins of Brougham Castle, thinking of Sidney, who, as tradition said, penned there snatches of his "Arcadia," which was written for his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. Here they clambered up broken stairs and out into the sunlight on ridges of fractured walls, to lie on an old turret,

> Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers
> Their faintest whisper to the passing breeze,
> Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains.*

The long companionship, the deep and unbroken communion of spirits, really began in this happy season. It was then, too, that he first felt the stirrings of affection for Mary Hutchinson, his sister's friend, to him at that time

> By her exulting outside look of youth
> And placid under-countenance, first endeared.†

Their haunts were the high hill beyond Penrith called the Beacon, on which the signal fires used to blaze in times of Border warfare, and the crags and pools on the

* "Prelude," VI. 221.

† *Ibid.*, VI. 226.

bare fell, and the shady woods and lanes of eglantine, whence he gathered thoughts of love—

> The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.

In their wanderings they passed the spot where, as a child, he had once been struck with sombre fear by its loneliness and the remembered story of an execution. Now, "in the blessed hours of early love," and with the loved one by his side, the same melancholy place gave him only joy, for

> The mind is lord and master—outward sense
> The obedient servant of her will.

It is difficult to believe that this awakening of interest in Mary Hutchinson, in the summer of 1789, deepened at once into the passion of love. Many years, filled with other associations, were to intervene between this idyll and their marriage in 1802. Wordsworth's ardour and self-will were so intense that, had he at this time really loved, he would have been unlikely to suppress his feelings. It is to be supposed, also, that in such case more frequent mention of Miss Hutchinson would have been made in Dorothy Wordsworth's letters to Miss Pollard.

In one of these, written at Forncett, January 25, 1790, she says:

"My brother John, I imagine, sailed for India on Saturday or Sunday in the 'Earl of Abergavenny.' He wrote to me the other day in excellent spirits. William is at Cambridge, Richard in London, Kit at Hawkshead. How we are squandered abroad!" She tells about her little voluntary school of nine pupils, and adds this interesting paragraph: "Mr. Wilberforce has been with us rather better than a month. Tell your father I hope he will give him his vote at the next general election. I believe him to be one of the best of men. He allows me ten guineas a year to distribute in what manner I think best to the poor."

Defending herself from Miss Pollard's insinuation that Mr. W. (Wilberforce?) may have come as a suitor, she says, in a letter of March 30, 1790, "Your way of

accounting for my absence of mind diverted me exceedingly. I will set forward with assuring you that my heart is perfectly disengaged, and then endeavour to show you how very improbable it is that Mr. W. would think of me. As to the first point, I can only say that no man I have seen has appeared to regard me with any degree of partiality, nor has anyone gained my affections." She says she is reading Pope's works, and a little treatise on Regeneration, which, with Mrs. Trimmer's "Œconomy of Charity," Mr. Wilberforce had given her. She is going to read the New Testament with Doddridge's exposition. In this letter we find her first mention of her brother's future wife: "The seal you showed so much sagacity in your conjectures about was given me by a Penrith friend, Mary Hutchinson." Of her brother she writes: "I long to have an opportunity of introducing you to my dear William. I am very anxious about him just now, as he will shortly have to provide for himself. Next year he takes his degree. When he will go into orders I do not know, nor how he will employ himself. He must, when he is three-and-twenty, either go into orders or take pupils. He will be twenty in April."

It must not be inferred from the expression "provide for himself" that her brother was being educated at the expense of her uncles. His own share of his parents' estates would be sufficient to pay for his education, though, until the money came in, his uncles were probably obliged to advance part of the sum required. But at best, if Lord Lonsdale should pay his debt and all other business matters should be satisfactorily settled, very little would remain for William and Christopher after deducting their college expenses. We find Dorothy writing as follows on December 7, 1791:*

"Our grandmother has shown us great kindness, and has promised to give us five hundred pounds (£100 apiece), the first time she receives her rents. . . . Our several resources are these: £500 which my grandmother is to

* Erroneously printed "1790" in Professor Knight's "Letters of the Wordsworth Family." From the original manuscript.

give us, £500 which is due on account of my mother's fortune, about £200 which my uncle Kit owes us, and £1,000 at present in the hands of our guardians, and about £150 which we are to receive out of the Newbiggin estate, with what may be adjudged as due to us from Lord Lonsdale. My brother Richard has about £100 per annum, and William has received his education, for which a reduction will be made; so that I hope, unless we are treated in the most unjust manner possible, my three younger brothers and I will have £1,000 apiece, deducting in William's share the expense of his education."

If the young collegian could have made up his mind to be a clergyman, his connection with his uncle Cookson would probably have helped him to a church "living." But doubtless the taint communicated to the profession by its dependence on worldly favour and the patronage of the rich rendered it unattractive to his pure and generous mind. It was possible for a young graduate, with little more theological reading than that required for the general degree of Bachelor of Arts, to be placed almost at once in a curacy. Of course, standing in the university affected a candidate's chances of securing what is known as a "good" living—that is, one with a large salary.

CHAPTER III

ADRIFT

The academic year, or at least that part of it in which residence was required, being only about half the calendar year, students who expected to distinguish themselves in the examinations were accustomed to spend their final long vacation in hard study, either at Cambridge or in some quieter place. Wordsworth's relatives, therefore, were disappointed when he decided to make use of the summer and early autumn of 1790 in a way which apparently would not lead to academic honours nor to a profession nor to pecuniary profit. It was most natural, however, that Wordsworth, in his unsettled state of mind, should yield to his love of landscape and his fondness for walking, and hasten as soon as possible from the indoor restraints and the bookishness of the university. And the events then occurring with such good augury in France would arouse the hopeful curiosity of an open-minded and democratic youth. Undergraduate society at Cambridge was on the whole liberal as compared with the tone of thought in most of the homes from which the students came, and Wordsworth was predisposed by his Hawkshead life to practise, if not to profess, a belief in human equality. Nature had taught him that her laws, her faithfulness, and her beauty, could be observed as well in small as in great objects. Experience in divers ranks of society had shown him how ill-based were the conventional distinctions. It is not to be thought that the system of ideas known as Revolutionary had penetrated Cambridge without arousing his sympathetic interest. Yet it is likely, too, that, with the indifference to politics which characterizes Anglo-Saxon youth, he failed to realize at this time the importance or even the dramatic values of the great world-movement of

which he was soon to catch a glimpse. He cared far more for landscape. Indeed, the enjoyment of natural beauty was apparently his one absorbing passion. In planning a journey on foot from Calais to the Alps, he was willing to pass within a day's march of Amiens and Rheims without breaking his bird-like flight to see their cathedrals, and within fifty miles of Paris without being drawn into what was then, more than ever, the heart of the world's political circulation. The only object for which he turned aside was the Grande Chartreuse, where great natural beauty combined with religious interest to produce a peculiar romantic charm. A similar attraction led him once and only once again to interrupt his enjoyment of landscape for the sake of a monument of human design, the convent of Einsiedeln.

His companion was a fellow-collegian, Robert Jones, of Plas-yn-llan, in Wales, who remained his friend through life. They arrived in Calais on July 13, 1790, and set out next day on a "march of military speed," that carried them in precisely two weeks to Châlons on the Saône, a distance of over three hundred and fifty miles. They descended the Saône by boat to Lyons and sailed down the Rhone to St. Vallier, whence they walked to the Lake of Geneva. Climbing over the Simplon Pass, they visited Lakes Maggiore and Como, turned north again, and made a comprehensive survey of Switzerland, ending at Basel about September 21, where they bought a boat, in which they floated down the Rhine to Cologne in one week. It took them about a fortnight more to reach Calais, and the whole trip lasted exactly three months, with hardly a day of rest. Writing to Jane Pollard from Forncett on October 6, 1790, Dorothy quotes admiringly from a long letter she has received from her brother, in which he expresses great enthusiasm for the grand and beautiful scenes he has beheld and the tenderest affection for his sister. The following passages are the most interesting:

"We had perpetual occasion to observe that cheerfulness and sprightliness for which the French have always been remarkable. But I must remind you that we

crossed at the time when the whole nation was mad with joy in consequence of the revolution. It was a most interesting period to be in France; and we had many delightful scenes, where the interest of the picture was owing solely to this cause. I was also much pleased with what I saw of the Italians during the short time we were among them. We had several times occasion to observe a softness and elegance which contrasted strongly with the severe austereness of their neighbours on the other side of the Alps. . . . We have both enjoyed most excellent health; and we have been so inured to walking that we are both become almost insensible to fatigue. We have several times performed a journey of thirteen leagues over the most mountainous parts of Switzerland without any more weariness than if we had been walking an hour in the groves of Cambridge. Our appearance is singular; and we have often observed that, in passing through a village, we have excited a general smile. Our coats, which we had made light on purpose for the journey, are of the same piece; and our manner of carrying our bundles, which is upon our heads, with each an oak stick in our hands, contributes not a little to that general curiosity which we seem to excite. . . . I flatter myself still with the hope of seeing you for a fortnight or three weeks, if it be agreeable to my uncle, as there will be no necessity for me to be in Cambridge before the 10th of November. I shall be better able to judge whether I am likely to enjoy this pleasure in about three weeks. I shall probably write to you again before I quit France; if not, most certainly immediately on my landing in England. You will remember me affectionately to my uncle and aunt; as he was acquainted with my giving up all thoughts of a fellowship, he may, perhaps, not be so displeased at this journey. I should be sorry if I have offended him by it."

Three years after their delightful journey, Wordsworth dedicated to his fellow-traveller, by that time the Rev. Robert Jones, fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, a little volume entitled "Descriptive Sketches. In Verse. Taken during a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss, and Savoyard Alps. By W. Wordsworth, B.A., of St. John's, Cambridge." "In inscribing this little book to you," he says, "I consult my heart. You know well how great is the

difference between two companions lolling in a post-chaise, and two travellers plodding slowly along the road, side by side, each with his little knapsack of necessaries upon his shoulders. How much more of heart between the two latter!"

The original text of "Descriptive Sketches" was materially altered by Wordsworth in the edition of 1815, and much amended in the editions of 1820, 1827, 1832, 1836, 1845, and 1849. It was considerably longer than in the form which it finally attained. Many of the alterations were made in the interest of clearness and artistic finish, but some were attempts to moderate, discreetly if not prudishly, one or two passages of glowing description, and to take the very heart out of pages pulsing with ardent enthusiasm for liberty. This is not the place to discuss the literary value of the poem, but we may well expect that some of its eight hundred lines, as originally printed, will bear witness to its author's character and opinions in 1790, even though it was written for the most part in 1791 and 1792.

It took all the sunshine and beauty of the first few days' march to remove the sadness with which he set forth:

> Me, lured by hope her sorrows to remove,
> A heart, that could not much itself approve,
> O'er Gallia's wastes of corn dejected led.

If my conjectures about his love for "Lucy," her death, and his premature and unsuccessful endeavour to console himself with Mary Hutchinson are well founded, these lines have a pathetic meaning. He altered them in subsequent editions, leaving out the reference to his sorrows and their wasting effect, and making them read as follows:

> A hope that prudence could not then approve,
> That clung to Nature with a truant's love,
> O'er Gallia's wastes of corn my footsteps led.

In the edition of 1793 there are touches that the caution of his later years caused him to erase or blur—mention of "fair dark-eyed maids," who smiled from their

arboured gardens at the swift-striding English boys. In a strain which in maturer years he never permitted himself to employ, he describes the languorous afternoons and thrilled starlit evenings of an Italian summer:

> Slow glides the sail along th' illumined shore,
> And steals into the shade the lazy oar.
> Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs,
> And amorous music on the water dies.
> Heedless how Pliny, musing here, survey'd
> Old Roman boats and figures through the shade,
> Pale Passion, overpower'd, retires and woos
> The thicket, where th' unlisten'd stock-dove coos.

And again, in a passage only partly reproduced in later editions, we feel the same warmth:

> Farewell! those forms that, in the noon-tide shade,
> Rest, near their little plots of wheaten glade;
> Those steadfast eyes, that beating breasts inspire
> To throw the "sultry ray" of young Desire;
> Those lips, whose tides of fragrance come, and go,
> Accordant to the cheek's unquiet glow;
> Those shadowy breasts in love's soft light array'd,
> And rising, by the moon of passion sway'd.
> Thy fragrant gales and lute-resounding streams,
> Breathe o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams.

He describes the life of poor and humble people without a trace of condescension. This attitude was as yet so rare in English authors as to be almost novel. He paints with that kind of sympathy which really shares the feeling of its objects. He even puts himself in the place of the superstitious pilgrims to the wonder-working image at Einsiedeln, and in a tone of dejection cries:

> Without one hope her written griefs to blot,
> Save in the land where all things are forgot,
> My heart, alive to transports long unknown,
> Half wishes your delusion were its own.

The sight of half-starved peasants in the Vale of Chamonix leads to the strain with which the poem ends, the thought that poverty and disease are the children of tyranny. He burned to free Savoy from

her oppressors. Happiness, he declares, is found only where freedom smiles encouragement.

> In the wide range of many a weary round,
> Still have my pilgrim feet unfailing found,
> As despot courts their blaze of gems display,
> E'en by the secret cottage far away
> The lily of domestic joy decay;
> While Freedom's farthest hamlets blessings share,
> Found still beneath her smile and only there.

This may not be good poetry, but it sounds like heart-felt conviction. Then follows an apostrophe to France, which echoes his thoughts of 1791 and 1792, rather than those of 1790:

> And thou ! fair favoured region ! which my soul
> Shall love, till Life has broke her golden bowl,
> Till Death's cold touch her cistern-wheel assail,
> And vain regret and vain desire shall fail.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Yet, hast thou found that Freedom spreads her pow'r
> Beyond the cottage hearth, the cottage door:
> All nature smiles; and owns beneath her eyes
> Her fields peculiar, and peculiar skies.

Under these laboured and unsuccessful phrases may be discerned a strength of belief and a fervour of zeal which were just as real as if they had received lucid and compressed expression. France, he meant, was happy because she was free, visibly and demonstrably happier than other lands. Her mill-wheels clacked more merrily, her rivers rippled with brighter blue and cleaner white, her farmyard cocks sent forth a louder challenge:

> The measured echo of the distant flail
> Winded in sweeter cadence down the vale;
> A more majestic tide the water roll'd,
> And glowed the sun-gilt groves in richer gold.

He hails exultantly the prospect of her war with "Conquest, Avarice, and Pride," and prays God to grant that "every sceptred child of clay," who attempts in his presumption to stem the tide of Freedom, shall

> With all his creature sink—to rise no more.

These terms were much moderated and qualified and generally pulled about in the course of that censorship which the Wordsworth of later years exercised over his early poems. Read in its original form, "Descriptive Sketches" confirms his statement to his sister that he was a perfect enthusiast in his admiration of nature in all her original shapes. He was correct in thinking that perhaps scarcely a day of his life would pass in which he should not derive some happiness from the images gathered on his journey. The lovely forms and flashing eyes of which he caught a glimpse at the Lake of Como were accountable for a "thousand dreams of happiness which might be enjoyed upon its banks, if heightened by conversation and the exercise of the social affections." The poem shows with what sympathy of heart and acquiescence of the mind he shared the emotions of the French "at the time when the whole nation was mad with joy in consequence of the revolution." Several of the "many delightful scenes, where the interest of the picture was owing solely to this cause," he described twelve years later in "The Prelude," with a mastery he did not command at the time he wrote "Descriptive Sketches." The style is immeasurably heightened, and the record is no longer one of mere sensations chiefly, but of imagination brooding over incidents of life and forms of outward beauty, and making them a part of the poet's soul. The well-known opening of this famous portion of "The Prelude" explains more eloquently, if not more clearly, his two reasons for making the journey:

> When the third summer freed us from restraint,
> A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,
> Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
> And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side,
> Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight
> Did this unprecedented course imply
> Of college studies and their set rewards;
> Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
> Without uneasy forethought of the pain,
> The censures, and ill-omening of those

To whom my worldly interests were dear.
But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,
And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
Had given a charter to irregular hopes.
In any age of uneventful calm
Among the nations, surely would my heart
Have been possessed by similar desire;
But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.*

In "The Prelude" the journey is hastily narrated except for five broad descriptive passages. The first of these† depicts the release of "benevolence and blessedness," the triumphal arches, the garlands, the dances of liberty, the overflowing fraternity, which they witnessed in the northern French provinces, then rejoicing in the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. The second relates how the young wayfarers, sailing down the Rhone from Lyons to St. Vallier, were welcomed into the society of

a merry crowd
Of those emancipated, a blithe host
Of travellers, chiefly delegates, returning
From the great spousals, newly solemnized
At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven.‡

These were probably some of the representatives of Marseilles and their friends going home after the Festival of the Federation, on July 14, when the King and Lafayette, as commander of the National Guard, in the presence of the Queen, the Dauphin, and one hundred thousand delegates, had sworn fidelity to the Constitution before the Altar of the Country on the Champ de Mars. Englishmen, as children of a free nation, were in high favour in France. Wordsworth and his companion were received with open arms by these excited southerners:

Guests welcome almost as the angels were
To Abraham of old.

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* "Prelude," VI. 3 22. † *Ibid.*, 342-374. ‡ *Ibid.*, 384-414.

Together they landed, probably at Coudrieu, to take their evening meal. Every tongue was loosed. There were brave speeches of amity and glee. There was dancing hand in hand around the table. At early dawn the voyage was renewed and the enthusiasm commenced again, lasting till the young men quitted the glad throng at St. Vallier to pursue their way on foot. The third passage* repeats, with maturer reflections, his thoughts on seeing the Grande Chartreuse on a day when its sanctity was rudely profaned by a band of reformers. The fourth† is an inadequate attempt to catch the spirit of the Alps and the Swiss people. What he saw of the mountaineers confirmed his rapidly forming political opinions, and he cries:

> With such a book
> Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
> Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
> And universal lesson of mankind.

In the fifth‡ he elaborates an episode, not specially significant, of their walk above Lake Como.

In the midst of these he introduces a sublime account§ of a spiritual event, a happening within his own soul. The travellers suddenly learned, from the downward dropping of a stream, that they had crossed the Alps. When attention has been fixed for many hours upon the face of nature in a wild and difficult region, a discovery of this sort may possess a startling significance. But what struck Wordsworth was the fact that in this moment, when nature seemed very real, his own mind seemed equally real, and distinct from nature. At first, he says, he was lost, "halted without an effort to break through" the mystery of this abrupt estrangement from nature, who had been his intimate comrade and apparently of the same stuff with him. The first moment of bewilderment over, his soul rose triumphant in self-consciousness. He recognized her glory. She was not then, after all, dependent on

* "Prelude," VI. 414-488.
† *Ibid.*, 499-540.
‡ *Ibid.*, 691-726.
§ *Ibid.*, 557-640.

sense and subject to time and space; and assured of this he sang:

> Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
> Is with infinitude, and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort, and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be.

The road, having reached the summit of the Alpine pass, cannot go higher. The stream must flow into Italy. North must remain North, and South be ever South; but no limit is decreed to human souls. With this thought of the transcendence of mind, there flashed upon him a new conception of the meaning of visible things. The grand and terrible features of the gorge through which he descended

> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

The day was an epoch in his life, and the passage in which he recorded this experience is one of the most significant in all his works.

Lastly, in a tone quite at variance with the strain that ends "Descriptive Sketches," he attributes his interest in the new stir that animated France, not so much to Revolutionary principles as to "the independent spirit of pure youth," called forth by the widening prospects of fresh glories in the universe:

> A glorious time,
> A happy time that was; triumphant looks
> Were then the common language of all eyes;
> As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
> Their great expectancy: the fife of war
> Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
> A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove.
> We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
> Of their near neighbours; and when shortening fast
> Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,
> We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret
> For battle in the cause of Liberty.

> A stripling, scarcely of the household then
> Of social life, I looked upon these things
> As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,
> Was touched, but with no intimate concern.*

Wordsworth visited his sister at Forncett in the Christmas holidays. He was graduated Bachelor of Arts on January 21, 1791. His sister believed he might have obtained a fellowship had he tried, and doubtless if she thought so, her uncles thought so too. In a letter to Miss Pollard, from Forncett, dated Sunday morning, June 26, 1791, she says:

"William, you may have heard, lost the chance (indeed the certainty) of a fellowship, by not combating his inclinations. He gave way to his natural dislike to studies so dry as many parts of mathematics, consequently could not succeed at Cambridge. He reads Italian, Spanish, French, Greek, Latin, and English, but never opens a mathematical book. We promise ourselves much pleasure from reading Italian together at some time. He wishes that I was acquainted with the Italian poets, but how much I have to learn which plain English will teach me! William has a great attachment for poetry; so indeed has Kit, but William particularly, which is not the most likely thing to produce his advancement in the world. His pleasures are chiefly of the imagination. He is never so happy as when in a beautiful country. Do not think in what I have said that he reads not at all, for he does read a great deal; and not only poetry, and other languages he is acquainted with, but history, etc., etc."

What delightful chatter! What touching anxiety for her brother's reputation! Dorothy will not have Miss Pollard think him less than perfect, even though he has an aversion from mathematics and had not won college honours. From a statement she made in a previous letter to Miss Pollard, written at Forncett on May 23, it appears that this notable scholar had not spent even his last Christmas holidays at work in Cambridge, but had preferred her society to that of the mathematicians. Her romantic heart doubtless excused him to itself.

* "Prelude," VI. 754.

In February, 1791, the poet, not yet twenty-one years old, went to London, probably with no definite plan. The following summary, at the opening of the ninth book of "The Prelude," gives but a very loose account of the time he spent there:

> Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,
> I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,
> Month after month. Obscurely did I live,
> Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,
> By literature, or elegance, or rank,
> Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent
> Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,
> With less regret for its luxurious pomp,
> And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,
> Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,
> Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

As a matter of fact, he lived much less than a year in London. The sources of our knowledge of this period are few, and some of them are misleading. The seventh and eighth books of the great autobiographical poem contain many passages reflecting, after an interval of thirteen years, some of the impressions made upon him by the sights of the city, but all carefully chosen to illustrate "the growth of a poet's mind," and particularly to show how the love of nature, by which he means, in this connection, country scenes and sounds, remained supreme. The incidents are not important in themselves, nor do they furnish much information as to his reasons for being in London and his main occupation there. Apart from their effect on his poetic faculties, which can scarcely, after all, have been comparable in importance to the influence of Hawkshead and Cambridge, they were purely external and fleeting, the things every fairly observant country-bred youth would notice in the streets and public haunts of town. His effort to set them forth as contributions to his poetic development seems a little forced. His use of them is too systematic and reveals too clearly his underlying design, in a way that suggests pedantry. The want of spontaneity in these passages affects the language, which is occasionally obscure, the sentences being

long and complex. He invites us again and again to observe the precise degree in which this or that quality of soul, now Fancy, now Imagination, now Love of Man, now Sense of Majesty and Power, was affected by some happening, which one hesitates to call trivial only because it caught the eye of Wordsworth. And the phrases are huddled back upon themselves, in these passages, as if for an onward rush, which does not come. On the other hand, no poet before him had ever described with the same combination of simplicity, exactness, zest, and elevation, the every-day incidents of street-life. Where they are not spoiled by too much moralizing reference to his own inward growth, these descriptions are delightful, and mark a decisive step in English poetry.

Except for two or three short visits from Cambridge, it would appear that Wordsworth had never seen London until this time. The wealth of sensations which could be tasted there might well have seemed to justify him in spending a few months in the metropolis as a finishing touch to his scholastic education. At least, he offers no other excuse, but says that after quitting every comfort of that privileged ground, the university, he was

> Well pleased to pitch a vagrant tent among
> The unfenced regions of society.

His want of occupation did not trouble him. With all the imprudence of boyhood and with a poet's valuation of whatsoever might feed his mind, regardless of bodily sustenance, he deliberately took one more vacation:

> undetermined to what course of life
> I should adhere, and seeming to possess
> A little space of intermediate time
> At full command, to London first I turned,
> In no disturbance of excessive hope,
> By personal ambition unenslaved,
> Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,
> From dangerous passions free.*

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* "Prelude," VII. 58.

It was an unpremeditated, natural piece of self-indulgence, or a yielding, rather, to the impulses which always ruled him. His whole life was independent, but sudden outbreaks of extreme and wayward impatience of restraint frequently gave sharper accent to its general tenor. At such times he was stubborn, bold, adventurous, improvident. He had no home and no parents, and his elder brother was too young to exercise any authority over him.

Among the public celebrities whom he saw or heard he mentions Mrs. Siddons "in the fulness of her power" and Burke. It is to be remembered that the tribute to Burke in the seventh book of "The Prelude" was added in a late version of the poem, and does not reflect the poet's feelings in 1791. The great statesman had published, only a few months before Wordsworth's arrival in London, his "Reflections on the Revolution in France." The immediate occasion of this work was a sermon by the Rev. Richard Price, a Nonconformist minister, before the Revolution Society, a club originally formed to celebrate the "glorious Revolution" of 1688. This society had not only listened to a discourse from Dr. Price in praise of the French Revolution, but had forwarded to the National Assembly an address which Burke declared to have sprung from the principles of that sermon. The nobleness of the political philosophy embodied in Burke's famous pamphlet contrasts shiningly with his sarcastic attack on Dr. Price, which is mean and illiberal. And to anyone who had even a faint idea of how just, and, indeed, how necessary, was the French uprising, and how extravagant and unfeeling was the Queen over whose fate Burke became eloquent, his rhetoric must have seemed sadly out of place. The deplorable effect of his "Reflections" in precipitating war between England and France, and thus helping to engender the Terror, might have been foreseen. This book, more than anything else, turned the current of English opinion, which had not yet been decidedly unfavourable to the Revolution. It put majestic precept and august principles into the mouths of stupid people,

who used them as a covering for prejudice and ignorance and panic. As John Morley has said:

> "Before the Reflections was published the predominant sentiment in England had been one of mixed astonishment and sympathy. Pitt had expressed this common mood both in the House of Commons and in private."

Those who seized most greedily upon his denunciation of the popular excesses in France, and his prophecies that the Revolution would fail, were precisely the persons least able to comprehend the great principles upon which his argument was based. As Morley again says: "It is when we come to the rank and file of reaction that we find it hard to forgive the man of genius who made himself the organ of their selfishness, their timidity, and their blindness." By the time that Wordsworth heard him in Parliament, Burke, who had once been an object of derision and fear to the Tory party, had, through vindicating the all too natural English view of French affairs, become the oracle of privilege and "patriotism." He spoke, as Wordsworth accurately records, in defence of immemorial dependencies and vested rights, for they were what was meant by "social ties endeared by Custom." The poet does not say that he was persuaded at the time that Burke was right, or that he approved the orator's keen ridicule of all systems built on abstract rights. We know that for six or eight years to come he disapproved of the national policy which Burke did so much to promote. We know that it was perhaps the deepest sorrow of his life that his country should have adopted such a policy. And "The Prelude" was written just when a reaction against his youthful ideals was most powerful within him.

He heard the popular preachers, and was not untouched by the admonitions of some, though he satirizes the affected manner, the fine dressing, and the sentimental oratory, of others. He glanced at the examples of folly, vice, and extravagance, which made London

their domain, but lingered over sights of courage and of tenderness, rendered more touching by contrast. He felt the sensation of kinship with passing unknown persons, coupled with the unhappy realization that each of us is like a ship sailing its own course upon the waters. Interest in man, but not yet love of man, at least not love comparable to his love of nature, grew within him. It is evident that the town took far less hold upon his affection, stirred shallower depths of imagination, and was in itself less sufficient, than his native hills. This is amply shown in the contrast between the description of St. Bartholomew's Fair, near the end of the seventh book, and the description of a Westmorland market in one of the vales below Helvellyn, with which the eighth book opens. The former appears scant in loving detail, and rather perfunctory, while the latter breathes at once the spirit of Wordsworth and of rural life. He gave deep and eloquent expression to his sense of the futility of city life as a source of spiritual strength, and it was the memory of more permanent powers that sustained him "in London's vast domain." This inner calm and perception, which it occurs to few men to strive for, were the highest good for which Wordsworth lived. All other powers were in his estimation secondary. But such as they were, London fed some of them. He was taught by the memorials piled up in the ancient city to feel his country's greatness. The place, he says, "was thronged with impregnations." It feelingly set forth the unity of men. It smote the soul with the sublime idea that there is among men

> One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
> For the sun's light.

There is no trace in "The Prelude" by which we can be sure of more than one or two things in regard to his ordinary external life at this time. He was independent of the people with whom he lodged, could come and go as he pleased, and had much time to spend in free roving. The first streak of clear light in the way of positive fact comes, unfortunately, after he had left

London. It is in a letter from his sister to Miss Pollard, from Forncett, May 23, 1791. She writes:

"I hope my brother William will call at Halifax on his way into Cumberland. He is now in Wales, where he intends making a pedestrian tour, along with his old friend and companion Jones, at whose house he is at present staying. . . . My aunt would tell you that she saw my brothers Richard and William in town."

The sojourn in London had lasted less than four months. How long the young man remained in Wales is not known. He visited his fellow-collegian and former companion in foreign travel, Robert Jones, at the latter's home, Plas-yn-llan, near Ruthin, in Denbighshire, and was with him, apparently, from the middle of May till about the middle of September, and certainly till August 13. Together they made another pedestrian tour, and saw "the sea-sunsets which give such splendour to the Vale of Clwyd, Snowdon, the Chair of Idris, the quiet village of Bethgelert, Menai and her Druids, the Alpine steeps of the Conway, and the still more interesting windings of the wizard stream of the Dee."*

Wordsworth's most intimate friend at this time appears to have been another fellow-student just graduated from Cambridge, William Mathews, elder son of a London bookseller and Methodist local preacher, and brother of Charles Mathews, the comic actor. The latter, in his "Memoirs," gives the following description of him:

"William, my brother, was my senior by seven years, and, being intended for the church, of course looked to a college education. . . . My dear and excellent brother had great natural talents, and was indefatigable in his search after knowledge. He was essentially a gentleman in all his feelings; and his earliest associates were high, if not in rank, certainly in talent. The pursuits that engaged him were not those of other youths—he was devoted to profound and abstruse studies, mathematics, and had an absolute thirst for languages, six of which

* From the Dedicatory Letter to the Rev. Robert Jones, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, prefixed to "Descriptive Sketches."

he could speak or read before he was twenty years of age. To gain perfection in these, his time was occupied day after day, night after night. The school exercises, of course, were only Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; French was supplied by my father's means; but at the time I was young enough to sleep in the same room with him, he rose at four or five o'clock in the morning to study Italian and Spanish; of which pursuits he was so unostentatious that he threatened me with the penalty of his displeasure if I revealed to anyone the hours he stole from sleep. Thus qualified at a very early age, he entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, already an accomplished gentleman."

It was a sore point with Charles Mathews that their father tried to create "a mortifying distinction between the rank in society of his two sons—the eldest a gentleman, the youngest a tradesman." They both attended Merchant Taylors' School, where they took part in a rebellion against the masters, which led to the abolition of flogging. Their home was in London. Their father was a "serious" bookseller, a rigid Calvinist, the main pillar in one of Lady Huntingdon's chapels, and the victim of a horde of fanatical preachers, yet mild and liberal withal in disposition. Their mother was "strict in her adherence to the tenets of the Church of England." The happiness of parents and children alike was often troubled by the intrusion of this or that canting exhorter, and the boys grew up detesting what they termed "superstition." It is related of Charles Mathews that he was in the habit of impersonating Coleridge.

Wordsworth's letters to William Mathews are the only ones in which we see the poet indulge a vein of youthful levity. Beginning in this tone of irresponsible banter, they soon become more serious, though not less outspoken. Mathews entertained republican principles. He was apparently unsettled in life and desirous of becoming a journalist. In his correspondence with him, Wordsworth expresses himself more plainly on public questions and on the subject of his own course of life than anywhere else. As was natural between young men of the same age who had been at the university

together, there was no concealment of opinion. Their interchange of letters continued till 1796, at least, covering the most obscure period of Wordsworth's life, a period that was probably, to the few persons who knew him well, the most interesting. Time, and very likely a desire on his part and that of his family to cover his actions and sufferings in these years with oblivion, have left us only a few of his letters to Mathews, but they are very significant. The young poet's temper was impetuous. His self-will was strong. He felt the impulse of vagrant passions. His principles were of the kind that English society stamped with disapproval, as dangerous and subversive. And in 1791 he had as yet gone through or witnessed no experiences to damp his ardour and arouse misgivings. Mathews went to the West Indies to practise law, probably in 1800 or 1801, and died in the latter year, of yellow fever, in Tobago. In a letter to this friend, from Plas-yn-llan, written June 17, 1791, Wordsworth expends many words in boyish excuses for not writing sooner. He then says:

"You will see by the date of this letter that I am in Wales, and, whether you remember the place of Jones's residence or no, will immediately conclude that I am with him. I quitted London about three weeks ago, where my time passed in a strange manner; sometimes whirled about by the vortex of its *strenua inertia*, and sometimes thrown by the eddy into a corner of the stream, where I lay in almost motionless indolence. Think not, however, that I had not many very pleasant hours; a man must be unfortunate indeed who resides four months in Town without some of his time being disposed of in such a manner as he would forget with reluctance."

After the awkward gambols of William's epistolary pen, it is delightful to read one of his sister's letters, so easy are they and cordial, so open-hearted and affectionate, so full of keen remarks. She writes to Jane Pollard from Forncett, June 26, 1791:

"I often hear from my brother William, who is now in Wales, where I think he seems so happy that it is

probable he will remain there all the summer, or a great part of it. Who would not be happy enjoying the company of three young ladies in the Vale of Clewyd, and without a rival? His friend Jones is a charming young man, and has five sisters, three of whom are at home at present. Then there are mountains, rivers, woods, and rocks, whose charms without any other inducement would be sufficient to tempt William to continue amongst them as long as possible. So that most likely he will have the pleasure of seeing you when he visits Halifax, which I hope he will do in his road to the North. He thinks with great pleasure of paying that place a visit where I have so many friends. I confess you are right in supposing me partial to William. I hope when you see him you will think my regard not misplaced. Probably, when I next see Kit, I shall love him as well; the difference between our ages at the time I was with him was much more perceptible than it will be at our next meeting. His disposition is of the same cast as William's, and his inclinations have taken the same turn, but he is much more likely to make his fortune. He is not so warm as William, but has a most affectionate heart. His abilities, though not so great perhaps as his brother's, may be of more use to him, as he has not fixed his mind upon any particular species of reading or conceived an aversion to any. He is not fond of mathematics, but has resolution sufficient to study them, because it will be impossible for him to obtain a fellowship without them."

William's second letter to Mathews from Plas-yn-llan, August 13, of the same summer, is in the same frivolous and mock-bombastic vein as the first.

"You desire me to communicate to you copiously my observations on modern literature, and transmit to you a cup replete with the waters of that fountain. You might as well have solicited me to send you an account of the tribes inhabiting the central regions of the African Continent. God knows my incursions into the fields of modern literature—excepting in our own language three volumes of Tristram Shandy, and two or three papers of the Spectator, half subdued—are absolutely nothing. Were I furnished with a dictionary and a grammar, and other requisites, I might perhaps make an attempt upon Italy, an attack valiant; but

probably my expedition, like a redoubted one of Caligula's of old, though of another kind, might terminate in gathering shells out of Petrarch, or seaweed from Marino. The truth of the matter is that when in Town I did *little*, and since I came here I have done nothing. A miserable account! However, I have not in addition to all this to complain of bad spirits. That would be the devil indeed. I rather think that this gaiety increases with my ignorance, as a spendthrift grows more extravagant the nearer he approximates to a final dissipation of his property. I was obliged to leave all my books but one or two behind me. I regret much not having brought my Spanish grammar along with me. By peeping into it occasionally I might perhaps have contrived to keep the little Spanish or some part of it, that I was master of. I am prodigiously incensed at those rascal creditors of yours. What do they not deserve? Pains, stripes, imprisonments, etc., etc. . . . Adieu, hoping to hear from you soon, and that your letter will bring gladder tidings of yourself. I remain most affectionately yours. Chear up is the word."

Mathews was discontented with his work, and made some wild proposal to Wordsworth, to which the latter composed a very sensible reply, dated Cambridge, September 23.

They were dallying with the idea of throwing themselves upon the world as vagrants, wandering from place to place in the manner of Goldsmith with his flute. But Wordsworth rejected the alluring project, sagely remarking:

"I should not be able to reconcile to my ideas of right the thought of wandering about a country without a certainty of being able to maintain myself, being indebted for my existence to those charities of which the acceptance might rob people not half so able to support themselves as myself."

On October 9 Dorothy Wordsworth writes to Jane Pollard from Forncett:

"William is at Cambridge. . . . Mr. Wilberforce is at Forncett. I know not when my brother William will go into the North; probably not so soon as he intends, as he is going to begin a new course of study, which he

may perhaps not be able to go on with so well in that part of the world, as I conjecture he may find it difficult to meet with books. He is going, by the advice of my uncle William, to study the Oriental languages."

No doubt his uncle wished to fix him in some settled pursuit, preferably the study of divinity, to which "the Oriental languages," presumably represented by Hebrew, would be a beginning. His friend Mathews, like himself, was either attracted or urged by circumstances to enter the ministry. Like Milton, the young poet shrank from giving up his independence, though he could not have said with Milton: "No delay, no rest, no care or thought almost of anything, holds me aside until I reach the end I am making for, and round off, as it were, some great period of my studies." Delay was what he sought. He was conscious of possessing peculiar powers, as we know from "The Prelude," although his letters to Mathews do not give that impression. They are as modest as could be. He blames himself for his hesitation, confesses he is no scholar, does not attempt to excuse himself by reason of any special ambition, but raises the objection that he is unwilling to be tied down to any pursuit. As he had no home, and could not be for ever visiting his friends, he seems to have spent about half the autumn of 1791 at Cambridge, reading Italian and Spanish, and not following a definite plan of study. The likeliest opening for a young man of literary tastes, but without fortune, was to take holy orders. To stay about the university after graduation with any other purpose was rather unusual. There was pressure from his family; on the other hand, there was the inward urging after freedom, experience, knowledge of the beauties and wonders of the world. Like many another young graduate, he thought of foreign travel as a means of combining study with the gratification of a craving for these things. From the general tone of his correspondence with Mathews, in which he frequently mentions his desire to preserve intellectual liberty, it is evident that he hesitated on moral grounds to commit himself to entering the clerical

profession. He, no less than his friend, panted ardently after independence. He could not have failed, moreover, to see that the principles of established religion were seriously brought into question by some of the most acute minds in his own country and elsewhere, and that the trend of public events was making against anything like placid acceptance of even the most venerable traditions. His letters are those of an awakened and restive spirit. It is not possible to assert, from the evidence which remains, that he was at this time a believer in Christianity, nor is it possible to be certain that he was not.

CHAPTER IV

INFLUENCE OF ROUSSEAU

We hear from Wordsworth next at Brighton, November 23, 1791, waiting for favourable winds to take him to France. He writes thence to Mathews:

"I have been prevented from replying to your letter by an uncertainty respecting the manner in which I should dispose of myself for the winter, and which I have expected to be determined every day this month past. I am now on my way to Orleans, where I purpose to pass the winter, and am detained here by adverse winds. I was very happy to hear that you had given up your travelling scheme, that your father had consented to your changing your situation, and in consequence your mind was much easier. I approve much of your resolution to stay where you are till you meet with a more eligible engagement, provided your health does not materially suffer by it. It argues a manly spirit which you will undoubtedly be careful to preserve. I am happy to find that my letter afforded you some consolation. There are few reflections more pleasing than the consciousness that one has contributed in the smallest degree to diminish the anxiety of one's friends. . . .

"I expect I assure you considerable pleasure from my sojourn on the other side of the water, and some little improvement, which God knows I stand in sufficient need of.

"I am doomed to be an idler through my whole life. I have read nothing this age, nor indeed did I ever. Yet with all this I am tolerably happy. Do you think this ought to be a matter of congratulation to me, or no? For my own part I think certainly not. My uncle, the clergyman, proposed to me a short time ago to begin a course of Oriental literature, thinking that that was the best field for a person to distinguish himself in, as a man of letters. To oblige him I consented to

pursue the plan upon my return from the Continent. But what must I do amongst that immense wilderness, I who have no resolution, and who have not prepared myself for the enterprise by any sort of discipline amongst the Western languages? who know little of Latin, and scarce anything of Greek. A pretty confession for a young gentleman whose whole life ought to have been devoted to study. And thus the world wags. But away with this outrageous egotism. Tell me what you are doing, and what you read. What authors are your favourites, and what number of that venerable body you wish in the Red Sea? I shall be happy to hear from you immediately. My address, Mons. W. Wordsworth, Les Trois Empereurs, à Orléans. I am no Frenchman, but I believe that is the way that a letter is addressed in France. I should have deferred this epistle till I had crossed the water, when I might have had an opportunity of giving you something new; had I not imagined you would be surprised at not hearing from me, and had I not had more time on my hands at present than I am likely to have for some time. Adieu. Yours most affectionately and sincerely, W. WORDSWORTH."

Why did Wordsworth make choice of France? No doubt the agreeable impression produced by the French whom he had met on his long foot-tour had something to do with it. They had charmed him by their manners, their alertness, and their speech. He knew the language fairly well by this time. And there was no doubt a more significant reason, in his sympathy with the Revolutionary spirit, now at its height. Love of adventure, a desire to be near the scene of great events, a feeling that the air of France would be good for him at that particular time when he was hesitating and France was rushing confidently forward—all these elements were doubtless present in his mind as motives. The study of the Oriental languages was becoming a faint and distant prospect. We have seen that he was studying several of the Romanic languages, evidently with a view to fitting himself for teaching them. It was doubtful whether he would settle in England on his return. His brother John was coming and going between home and the Indies, both East and West. William's thoughts

were often turned in the direction of Barbados. As he has told us, he felt a leaning towards a military career, or at least towards being a General! In fact, he had big hopes, and thought the world was all before him where to choose. His sister, whose nature was equally ardent, but who seems to have been up to this time richer in real heart experience, was making quiet observations at Forncett. She chafed against restraint, but her only outlet was to share, in sympathy, the actions of her roving brothers, John and William, and the scholastic triumphs of Christopher. She was as anxious as a mother that William and Christopher and John should have every advantage. One of her great concerns was to see them educated and started in life before the modest fortune of the family was quite exhausted. And so it was with great relief that she wrote to her friend on December 7, 1791:

"Poor Richard is quite harassed with our vexatious business with that tyrannical Lord Lonsdale; he has all the plague of it. William is, I hope, by this time arrived in Orleans, where he means to pass the winter for the purpose of learning the French language, which will qualify him for the office of travelling companion to some young gentleman, if he can get recommended; it will at any rate be very useful to him, and as he can live at as little expense in France as in England, or nearly so, the scheme is not an ineligible one. He is at the same time engaged in the study of the Spanish language, and if he settles in England on his return (I mean if he has not the opportunity of becoming a travelling tutor) he will begin the study of the Oriental languages."

Wordsworth's life was by no means uneventful. If contact with supremely important public affairs and intimacy with great spirits make a life eventful, we may say, indeed, that no other English poet, since the years when Milton sat at the council table with Cromwell, has undergone experiences so heart-stirring as those which came in a few years to the quiet young poet from the North Country. What would not any student of history give to have walked across France in the inspiring summer of 1790? In the calendar of great

days, what lover of literature would not mark as memorable above all others one on which he had met Coleridge and won his heart for ever? How many occurrences in any man's life could have been reckoned so notable as making friends with Charles Lamb and Walter Scott? And we have now come to an epoch in Wordsworth's personal history which had all the charm of adventure and romance, together with a spice of danger, and in which he touched, as with his bare hand, the vast coils that were generating heat and light for a world that was to move faster than ever before and through clearer spaces. His poetry yields sustenance to old and young, to the ignorant and the well informed, but can be really appreciated only by those who have entered into its spirit in two ways—by natural sympathy with his mode of thought, and by knowledge of his life. One of the most decisive periods of that life was the thirteen or fourteen months of his second visit to France. From the seclusion of Hawkshead, the sheltered luxury of Cambridge, the slow pace and quiet tone of English and Welsh parsonages and country-houses, he stepped in a single day into the brilliancy, the hardness, the peril, and excitement, of Revolutionary France.

The contrast between the two countries would have been stimulating at any time; in 1791 it was almost overpowering. His sojourn in France enabled him to gather into the solidity of a system those faint impulses of love for humanity which were stirring in him during his stay in London. It confirmed his doubts of the validity of the religion in which he had been brought up. It strengthened his implicit republicanism into an explicit and outspoken political creed, and shook his faith in the paramount excellence of his own country. It widened immensely the scope of his "civism," to use a word more current then than now, for the step from patriotism to a love which embraces one's own country and another is enormous.

Until recently very little information has been available about Wordsworth's life in France and, indeed, throughout the entire period between 1790 and 1795,

except the abundant revelations of his inward growth which he made in "The Prelude." Such knowledge of his actions as we now possess is extremely valuable for the study of his character and his poetry and also of human history, for even had he been no poet, but only the clear and passionate observer that he was, his experiences would rank among the most precious documents of the Revolution. In later years he was unwilling to let the world know how extreme had been his opinions and how irregular his conduct; yet the agony of his spirit for a long time after his return from France showed that he had identified himself more completely with the Revolutionary cause and with French life than he was willing to admit in plain terms.

Before endeavouring to penetrate this mystery, and even before piecing together the most significant of his own poetical statements concerning the effect of his experiences in France, we must consider an influence to which he was probably exposed before he left England, and which unquestionably continued and deepened on the other side of the Channel. This was the influence of Rousseau.

Wordsworth was never a browsing reader. In the course of his long life, so uncommonly exempt from petty cares and interruptions, he read much, to be sure, but seldom with avidity. He went to books as to a serious task. His sister's Grasmere Journal, if we had not the evidence of his own diction, would show that he studied Chaucer and the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets with extreme care. He found pleasure especially in books of travel and description. He was familiar with much classical and Italian literature. Books to him were "a substantial world," very real, as real almost as living persons, and therefore not to be lightly treated. Amid their pressure, as amid the unremitting urgency of friends, he still preserved his independence and, on the whole, few other great poets are so little indebted to books. As we have seen, he reproached himself for his indifference during his months of leisure after leaving college.

One author, however, he almost certainly read before the close of 1791, and, curiously enough, this was a writer who himself had been indifferent to books. Rousseau it is, far more than any other man of letters, either of antiquity or of modern times, whose works have left their trace in Wordsworth's poetry. This poor, half-educated dreamer, just because he was poor, half educated, and a dreamer, found his way to the centre of his age, the centre of its intellectual and emotional life. And here all original and simple souls met him. They were drawn thither by the same force that drew him, by a desire to return to nature. Exaggeration apart, and thinking not so much of his systematic working out of his views, which was generally too abstract and speciously consistent, as of their origin, purpose, and spirit, one must acknowledge their truth. They are as obviously true now as they were startlingly true when first uttered. They could not have seemed novel to Wordsworth, who was prepared for them by having lived with lowly people, of stalwart intelligence and worthy morals, at Hawkshead. Originality often consists in having remained unconscious of perverse departures from simple and natural ways of thought. A person who has been brought up to know and speak plain truth appears original in perverse and artificial society. We can imagine Wordsworth becoming, without the aid of Rousseau, very nearly what he did become. Nevertheless, the points of agreement are too numerous to be the result of mere coincidence.

What, in fine, are the distinctive elements in Rousseau? In the first place, we recognize in him the prevalence of reverie as a mode of thought. Reverie is an inactive, unsystematic kind of meditation, distinguished from logical processes of discourse by the absence of consciously perceived steps. External events and objects are not primary essentials of this state, though they may induce or stimulate it. This is truly the poetic process, and Rousseau, in all his most original, vital, and characteristic passages, is a poet. We are reminded when we read them of

Wordsworth's remark, "Poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity."

A second element in Rousseau is his desire to simplify: to reduce the number and complexity of experiences and ideals. The mode of reverie always tends to concentrate and unite a multitude of concepts which have come into the dreamer's mind from many and diverse sources. To one who contemplates in this way, all dispersal of energy is painful and repugnant. When applied to things outside himself, to the social problem, the domestic life, the politics, the religion of his age, Rousseau's desire to simplify gave him the master-touch. He laid his finger on the racked nerves and prescribed quiet, concentration, and simplicity. But this meant revolution. For the habits and laws of society had been made on a different principle. Rousseau's Discourses, "Whether the Restoration of the Arts and Sciences has tended to purify Manners," and "On the Sources of Inequality among Men," show by their very titles the sequence of his thought and how the idea of simplification leads to the idea of equality.

Now, inequality is a sign and a cause of unstable equilibrium. Where inequality exists there is a constant pressure to restore the balance. He, therefore, who desires that life shall be simple, and that men shall attain, as nearly as possible, a level of opportunity, loves permanence and is the true conservative. Moreover, a man who thinks by means of reverie is by this peculiarity inclined to prefer permanence to change. The ruminative process is slow. Its objects are lovingly retained and caressed. Self as an active agent seems to the dreamer to be of less consequence than self as a receptive, passive organ, inwardly transforming and assimilating what comes to it. By this persistent association of self with the objects of contemplation, the latter become infused with life from the former. They lose their difference. They become humanized. Harmony is thus established between the poet or dreamer and the world which has been so long *his* world. He endows it with his own consciousness.

He sympathizes with it, after first projecting himself into it.

The permanent is the natural; the truly permanent, I mean, which in the long-run holds out against all artifice. And the natural qualities of human beings are common to nearly all. To the many, and not to the privileged or perverted few, must he go who would understand life. This conviction, proceeding from his habit of reverie and his love of simplicity, is the third characteristic of Rousseau. Being a child of the people, knowing their soundness and vigour, he felt no surprise in connection with such a principle, and set it forth as self-evident in his books. But it surprised Europe. To him it was a matter of course that wisdom should be justified of *all* her children: *securus judicat orbis terrarum.* There was nothing new in this conviction. It has, no doubt, been held always by nine-tenths of the human race. But it was new in a man of letters. It was not the opinion of cultured people. To culture as a process of distinction, Wordsworth, too, showed repugnance at Cambridge and in his London life. He, who was to write

> Of joy in widest commonalty spread,

scarcely needed the formulas in which Rousseau stated the instinctive faith that was in them both. The social aspect of the French Revolution, its glorious recognition of equal rights and common brotherhood, seemed to him—so gracious had been the influences of his boyhood—only natural, and he consequently sings:

> If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
> Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
> In part lay here, that unto me the events
> Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
> A gift that was come rather late than soon.*

A fourth quality of Rousseau is his intense individualism. Men in a state of nature, in close contact with the earth, with animals, and with other men not overpoweringly different from themselves, have to rely on

* "Prelude," IX., 244.

their own resources. A brooding, introspective person in such circumstances is liable to form a very high, if not an exaggerated, estimate of his own consequence as compared with that of his fellow-mortals. He is more likely to acknowledge the dependence of man upon nature than the solidarity of men with one another. The political views of Rousseau, as stated, for example, in "The Social Contract," are extremely individualistic. They are based on the assumption that society was originally anarchical, a collection of independent persons or families; and the individual, not having been a co-ordinate part of a pre-existing harmony, still retains, as it were, the right of secession; he has merely entered into a pact with other free and independent beings, and his surrender of some of his liberty may be only for a time. This conception would hardly have been possible in a Catholic. It was ultra-Protestant. It was Calvinistic. Wordsworth, with his Anglican training, never went to the individualistic extreme in his love of liberty. Even when most rebellious against the spirit of his bringing-up and his environment, he still felt that social ties had something of the naturalness and permanence of the external world. He thus acted the mediating part of a true Anglican, and even, one might say, of a true Englishman, by trying to preserve historic continuity without surrendering the right of private judgment.

Rousseau reasoned more abstractly and trenchantly. But trenchant abstract reasoning, in the complex field of social relations, is peculiarly liable to error. The natural, which is permanent, is also rational, and the rude popular way of arguing from analogy and precedent is therefore, after all, a sort of reasoning. Thus Wordsworth was not less rational than Rousseau, though in him pure reason was steadily counterbalanced by instinct. In Rousseau there was rarely an equilibrium between the two; he was alternately swayed by the one or the other; he at times surrendered himself to reverie and earned the name of sentimentalist; and, again, he was seduced by the speciousness of abstract reasoning, and

has therefore, perhaps not altogether unjustly, been called a sophist. Wordsworth, as became a poet, did not thus separate his mental processes. His reverie was more like reflection, it had more of the rational, discursive quality than Rousseau's; and his reasoning was less abstract, it never lost touch with things and events. As Edward Caird, using the method and language of Hegel, put the case, Wordsworth "transcends" Rousseau, reconciling his contradictions in a higher plane.*

He who believes that tillers of the soil and those in walks of life but little removed from them—that is, the majority of mankind—are leading natural and therefore rational lives, and that their social laws are relatively permanent, and therefore not wanting in authority, is not likely to be made unhappy by the outbreak of a revolution which promises to restore the artificially disturbed balance of human power and happiness. Rousseau's message, notwithstanding the final gloom of his life, was one of gladness. More than any other feature of the Revolution, Wordsworth, too, felt its joy.

* Essay on "Wordsworth" in "Essays on Literature," 1909.

CHAPTER V

IN REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE

When the young English poet set foot on French soil, near the end of November, 1791, the prospects for a successful issue of the Revolution were very bright. The movement was still apparently under the control of sober men, the disciples of Montesquieu, whose object was to model a State after the English pattern, with constitution, hereditary sovereignty, and legal safeguards of personal freedom. The excellent elements, also, of Rousseau's doctrines were being put into practice. The net result of the work of the Constituent Assembly was such as to win the approval of all French patriots and of nearly all progressive Englishmen, Burke being one of the few notable exceptions. What generous and emancipated spirit could fail to applaud its great achievements? It had abolished feudal privileges, many of the nobles themselves voluntarily renouncing their immemorial advantages in local government. It had taken from the king and reserved for the representatives of the people the power to make laws, to impose taxes, and to declare war and peace. It had wiped out the *octroi* and many other restrictions on agriculture, industry, and internal trade. It had abolished titles and the law of primogeniture, and thus reduced the nobles to the rank of ordinary citizens. It had thrown open all civil and military careers to all citizens, regardless of birth and religion. It had replaced the ancient provinces with eighty-three departments nearly equal in size. It had begun a vast reform of the national finances. It had firmly established an equally great and necessary judicial reform, by replacing the four hundred local systems of custom law with a uniform procedure, and setting on foot the work of codification.

It had undertaken with equal energy, though perhaps too drastically, to reform the abuses of ecclesiastical power, by granting freedom of worship to Jews and Protestants and admitting them to civil office, by destroying the corporate status of the Church, with respect to its right to hold property, and by thus nationalizing its immense wealth. The clergy were in this way made public functionaries, and the State undertook to support them and the charities which previously were maintained by the Church. The Catholic religion in France was to be independent of the Pope.

Some of the new laws affecting the delicate question of religion were plainly in advance of public opinion. They were demanded by the logic of the movement, but did not take sufficient account of either sentiment or facts. And it was evident, before the close of the year, that they had created an envenomed hostility. But an English Protestant, of radical proclivities and already less than lukewarm in his attachment to Christianity, would not be likely to resent their application in a country to whose past he was not attached, and whose present condition aroused in him the most enthusiastic hope.

On the other hand, there were graver signs of disaster, which even a youth might have read had he not been over-sanguine. The legislature sat in Paris, where it was subject to the threats of a populace which had tasted the wine of violence. Fanatical men governed the city, and were organizing its basest elements into an instrument of their will. The riots and bloodshed of July 17 were a bad omen of what might happen again at any crisis. The Constituent Assembly, before dissolving on September 30, had unfortunately passed a self-denying ordinance forbidding the re-election of its members, and on that date many of the steadiest and most experienced men disappeared from public life. The Legislative Assembly, which took up the dangerous task on October 1, should have laboured to conciliate all moderate opinions, and repel all extremists; on the contrary, it embittered the Catholics by taking severe

measures against priests who would not swear allegiance to the constitution; and by confiscating the property of emigrant nobles it exasperated those who had given asylum to these refugees.

We taste, however, the healthy savour which pervades all the relations of republican France with foreign Powers, in the firm declaration which the Assembly, on November 29, 1791, required the King to send to the foreign princes who were assembling their forces on the frontier:

"Tell them that France sees only enemies in every place where they permit preparations to be made against her; that we will religiously keep our oath to make no conquest; that we offer to be good neighbours and to give them the enviable friendship of a free and powerful country; that we will respect their laws, their customs, their constitutions, but shall require their respect for our own. Tell them finally that if the princes of Germany continue to favour preparations made against the French, the French will carry into their midst, not fire and sword, but liberty! Let them calculate what result may follow the awakening of nations."

Wordsworth, just arrived in Paris, must have felt the thrill of this eloquent challenge.

It was his plan to pass on at once to the Valley of the Loire, at Orleans, a region celebrated then as now for good cheer, friendly inhabitants, a soft climate, smiling landscapes, and fine old royal castles. The broad and shallow river flows with a lively current, through a fertile plain rich in orchards and wheat-fields, or under low cliffs of soft white limestone festooned with vines. In its blue mirror shakes the image of many a battlemented tower, which stood firm before the battering-ram and cannon, at Blois, Amboise, Luynes, Langeais, Angers. It mocks the ever-during walls of great cathedrals, at Orleans and Tours, with its perpetual flash and ceaseless change. Whether in the Orleannais or in Touraine, a stranger will think himself in the heart of France. Here are the grim ruins of mediæval castles, at Loches and Chinon, and the richly broidered resi-

dences of Francis I. and Henry II.—the châteaux of Chambord and Chenonceaux.

For an Englishman another attraction of this pleasant country would be the purity of the French spoken by its people. We have no means of knowing how long Wordsworth expected to remain in France, or whether he had plans more definite and far-reaching than those given for him by his sister. He intended at least to spend the winter at Orleans.

All that Wordsworth says in his autobiographical memoranda about his sojourn in France is as follows:

"In the autumn of 1791 I went to Paris, where I stayed some little time, and then went to Orleans, with a view of being out of the way of my own countrymen, that I might learn to speak the language fluently. At Orleans, and Blois, and Paris, on my return, I passed fifteen or sixteen months. It was a stirring time. The King was dethroned when I was at Blois, and the massacres of September took place when I was at Orleans, but for these matters see also the Poem. I came home before the execution of the King."

The poem is, of course, "The Prelude," of which the ninth, tenth, and eleventh books are occupied with his experiences in that period and their effect upon his mind. Events, places, and times are purposely blurred, and while the poet's feelings, or some of them, are doubtless portrayed with extraordinary fidelity, we cannot depend upon "The Prelude" for an accurate record of external facts during this long and exciting period of his life.

When he came to France, in November, 1791, Wordsworth proceeded at once to Paris. Here he visited, as he relates in the ninth book of "The Prelude,"

> In haste each spot of old or recent fame,
> The latter chiefly.

He sat in the open sun where only a few months before the sunless dungeons of the Bastille had been, and pocketed a stone as a relic, yet without much enthusiasm, and affecting more emotion than he felt. He was too young, too little versed in history, to care as much for these signs of the times as for the placid works

of art, among which he made a rather poor choice of the Magdalen of Le Brun.* The fact of the Revolution must have been brought home to him sharply enough, however, when he visited the Hall of the Assembly, the Jacobin Club, and the Palais Royal:

> In both her clamorous Halls,
> The National Synod and the Jacobins,
> I saw the Revolutionary Power
> Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms.

He stayed only four days in Paris before going south to Orleans. Here he spent part of the winter, and then removed to Blois, a smaller town, forty miles farther down the Loire. He was, according to his autobiographical memoranda, at Orleans again when the prisoners were massacred in September, 1792. From his own statement in "Descriptive Sketches" (lines 760-763, original edition), he was still there in October. He spent some time in Paris once more, was represented by proxy at the baptism and acknowledgment of his child at Orleans on December 15, and had returned to England certainly before the end of January, 1793. He does not distinguish in "The Prelude" between Orleans and Blois! The first trace of his doings is found in the following letter:

I am deeply indebted to the poet's grandson, Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, for permission to use a hitherto unpublished letter, and part of another, which throw more light at last upon this obscure period of Wordsworth's life:

[*William to Richard Wordsworth*, 1791.]

"ORLEANS. *Decbr.* 19*th*. My address:
"à MONSR WORDSWORTH,
"chez MONSR GELLET DU VIVIER,
"RUE ROYALE,
"à ORLEANS.

"DEAR BROTHER,

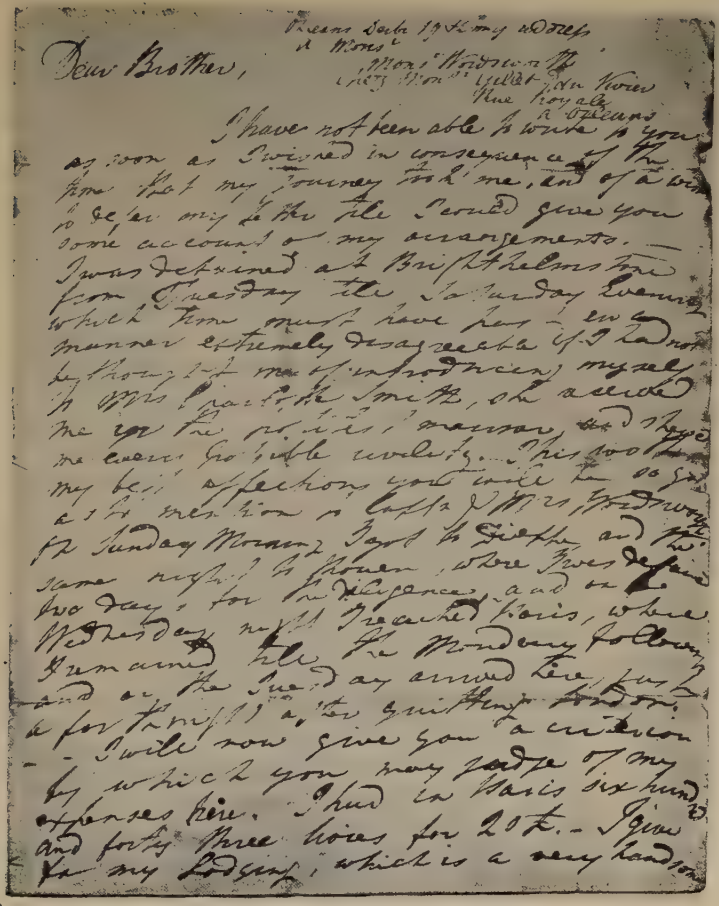
"I have not been able to write to you as soon as I wished in consequence of the time that my journey took me, and of a wish to defer my letter till I could

* This picture enjoyed peculiar notoriety, because it was supposed to be a portrait of Madame de la Vallière. Joseph Jekyll, a few years before, made a great point of seeing it.

give you some account of my arrangements. I was detained at Brighthelmstone from Tuesday till Saturday evening, which time must have passed in a manner extremely disagreeable if I had not bethought me of introducing myself to Mrs. Charlotte Smith; she received me in the politest manner, and showed me every possible civility. This with my best affection you will be so good as to mention to Captn and Mrs. Wordsworth. On Sunday morning I got to Dieppe, and the same night to Rouen, where I was detained two days for the diligence, and on the Wednesday night I reached Paris, where I remained till the Monday following, and on the Tuesday arrived here just a fortnight after quitting London.

"I will now give you a criterion by which you may judge of my expenses here. I had in Paris six hundred and forty-three livres for £20—I give for my lodging, which is a very handsome apartment on the first floor, 30 livres per month if I stay only three months, 27 if I stay six, and 24 and ten sous, viz. halfpence, if I stay 8 months—my board, which is in the same house, with two or three officers of the Cavalry and a young gentleman of Paris, costs me fifty livres per month, breakfast excluded. There are other little expenses which it would not be easy to sum up, but this, as you will perceive, is the bulk, and I think extremely reasonable considering the comfortable manner in which I live. Mrs. Smith, who was so good as to give me letters for Paris, furnished me with one for Miss Williams, an English lady, who resided here lately, but was gone before I arrived. This circumstance was a considerable disappointment to me; however, I have in some respects remedied it by introducing myself to a Mr. Foxlow, an Englishman who has set up a cotton manufactory here—I called upon him yesterday, and he received me very politely. He and Mrs. Foxlow are going into the country for a few days, but when they return I shall, I flatter myself, by their means be introduced to the best society this place affords.

"I have as yet no acquaintance but in the house, the young Parisian, and the rest of the tables, and one family which I find very agreeable, and with which I became acquainted by the circumstance of going to look at their lodgings, which I should have liked extremely to have taken, but I found them too dear for me.



Dear Brother,

WORDSWORTH'S LETTER FROM ORLEANS, DECEMBER, 1792

Facsimile of page 1

I have
of my evenings there . . . . . you
have heard of the news which is
in France before this letter
you; that the King has been
National Assembly and that
are going to make the emigran [*MS. torn away*]
We are all perfectly quiet here
likely to continue so; I find
all the people of any opulen
aristocrates and all the oth
democrates—I had imagined th
there were some people of wealth and circumstance favourers of the revolution, but here there is not one to be found . . .

"I have every prospect of likeing this place extremely well; the country tho' flat is pleasant, and abounds in agreeable walks, especially by the side of the Loire, which is a very magnificent river. I am not yet able to speak French with decent accuracy, but must of course improve very rapidly; I do not intend to take a master—I think I can do nearly as well without one, and it would be a very considerable augmentation of my expenses.

"You will give my best love to John, and repeat to Mrs. and Cap^n Wordsworth any parts of this letter you may think will interest them, with my kind remembrances. Compts. to the Gilpins. If you see Raincock and Fisher say I am sufficiently pleased with my situation, and tell the former he shall hear from me soon.

"I have said nothing of Paris and its splendours; it is too copious a theme; besides, I shall return that way and examine it much more minutely. I was at the National Assembly, introduced by a member of whose acquaintance I shall profit on my return to Paris.

"Adieu, Adieu."

[Unsigned.]

[Post mark illegible—date possibly Dec. 27.]
Addressed to Mr. Wordsworth,
A. Parkins, Esq.,
Gen. Post Off.,
London,
Angleterre.

Endorsed by
Richard Wordsworth.

19th Decr. 1791
Wm W. to R. W. } Letter from Orleans.

Brighthelmstone was Brighton. Mrs. Charlotte Smith was a well-known poetess. Miss Williams was undoubtedly Helen Maria Williams, the authoress. She was a celebrity at this time both in Britain and in France, well known in the former country as a poet and novelist, and in the latter as a member of a group of English residents who sympathized with the Revolution. She had gone to France in 1788 to live with her sister Cecilia, who had married a French Protestant minister, and had become acquainted with many prominent members of the Girondist party, a privilege she was to expiate during the Terror, when she was imprisoned by Robespierre. She wrote several descriptive and anecdotal books on France and Switzerland, all of them inspired by an intense and enthusiastic interest in the Revolutionary cause. Though she travelled extensively and was a close observer, the authority of her works has been contemptuously denied, partly because of their bias, but even more, I think, through the partisan prejudice of her critics. She was accused of being the mistress of John Hurford Stone, or of being secretly married to him. Stone, a native of Taunton in Somersetshire, was another English Revolutionist, associated with Price and Priestley in his own country, and with Paine in France. He was chairman at the famous banquet at White's Hotel in Paris, November 18, 1792, organized by certain Englishmen to celebrate the victories won by French arms, when Sir Robert Smith and Lord Edward Fitzgerald are said to have renounced their titles, and toasts were drunk to the speedy abolition of all hereditary titles and feudal distinctions.

Orleans harboured many aristocrats and was the scene of much unrest. Monsieur Gellet-Duvivier, with whom Wordsworth lodged and boarded, was later implicated in a local royalist uprising, and the young poet's first French companions were bitter in their hatred of the republic. From the passage in the ninth book of "The Prelude" (lines 81-389) in which he describes some of them, it is hard to tell when he is referring to Orleans

and when to Blois, a confusion intentionally made. In Orleans lived a notary's clerk, about thirty years old, named Paul Vallon, originally from Blois, and visiting him at this time was his sister Marie Anne, known familiarly as Annette. They probably were "the one family" which Wordsworth found "very agreeable." Annette was born at Blois on June 22, 1766, and was therefore about four years older than the young stranger. Her home was still at Blois, where two elder brothers, following their dead father's profession, were practising surgery, and two sisters older than herself were residing. Her mother had married again. The Vallons were royalists, but political differences melted before the fire of sudden and passionate love which sprang up between Annette and Wordsworth. She, like him, was unprotected by parental care; neither of them had sufficient pecuniary means to marry; the laws of marriage were in a state of confusion and uncertainty owing to the struggle between the Government and the Church; and furthermore the social ferment of the times made people reckless. It may be that the objection to an immediate marriage between a royalist and Catholic young woman of little or no fortune and a foreign lad who was a republican, a free-thinker, poor, and without a profession, trade, or business, came as much from the side of her relatives as of his. The nobility of his character, and his subsequent behaviour towards Annette, as well as her continued affection for him, make it impossible to suppose that he abandoned her voluntarily. Dorothy Wordsworth was cognizant of the facts; yet while the knowledge saddened and perturbed her it never weakened her love for her brother; which alone would be sufficient proof that he did what he could to make amends for his false step.

When Annette went home to Blois Wordsworth accompanied or followed her. In the spring she found herself with child.

The letter from Blois, to which reference has been made, shows that in May, 1792, he purposed to return to England before the next spring, and to take orders,

though he would have wished to defer this step. His intention, however, was to engage, together with Mathews, in some literary undertaking. He writes as follows:

"BLOIS,
"*May* 17, [1792].

"DEAR MATHEWS,

"When I look back on the length of time elapsed since my receipt of your last letter, I am overwhelmed by a sense of shame which would deprive me of the courage requisite to finish this sheet, did I not build upon that indulgence which always accompanies warm and sincere friendship. Your last reached me just at the moment when I was busy in preparing to quit Orleans, or certainly the sentiments which it breathes had forced from me an immediate answer. Since my arrival day after day and week after week have stolen insensibly over my head with inconceivable rapidity. I am much distressed that you have been so egregiously deceived by Mrs. D., and still more so that those infamous calumnies prevent you from taking upon you an office you are so well qualified to discharge. It gives me still more heartfelt concern to find that this slander has sunk so deep upon your spirits. Even supposing, which is not at all probable, that it should exclude you from the clerical office entirely, you certainly are furnished with talents and acquirements which, if properly made use of, will enable you to get your bread, unshackled by the necessity of professing a particular system of opinions.

"You have still the hope that we may be connected in some method of obtaining an independence. I assure you I wish it as much as yourself. Nothing but resolution is necessary. The field of Letters is very extensive, and it is astonishing if we cannot find some little corner, which with a little tillage will produce us enough for the necessities—nay, even the comforts—of life. Your residence in London gives you, if you look abroad, an excellent opportunity of starting something or other. Pray be particular in your answer upon this subject. It is at present my intention to take orders, in the approaching winter or spring. My uncle the clergyman will furnish me with a title. Had it been in my power, I certainly should have wished to defer the moment. But though I may not be resident in London, I need not therefore be prevented from engaging in any literary

plan, which may have the appearance of producing a decent harvest. I assure you again and again that nothing but confidence and resolution is necessary. Fluency in writing will tread fast upon the heels of practice, and elegance and strength will not be far behind. I hope you will have the goodness to write to me soon, when you will enlarge upon this head. You say you have many schemes. Submit at least a few of them to my examination. Would it not be possible for you to form an acquaintance with some of the publishing booksellers of London, from whom you might get some hints of what sort of works would be the most likely to answer?

"Till within a few days I nourished the pleasing expectation of seeing Jones upon the banks of Loire. But he informs me that at the earnest request of the Bishop of Bangor he has till Michaelmas taken upon [him] the office of usher in a school which the Bishop has just built. You know well that the Welsh Bishops are the sole patrons. This circumstance will connect him with D. Warren, and I hope prepare the way for a snug little Welsh living, of which our friend is certainly well deserving. Terrot some time ago addressed a letter to me at Orleans, promising me that it should soon be followed by another, in which he represented himself as stickling for preferment, not in the Church or the Army, but in the Custom-house. 'Tis all well. I wish heartily he may succeed. Let me entreat you most earnestly to guard against that melancholy, which appears to be making daily inroads upon your happiness. Educated as you have been, you ought to be above despair. You have the happiness of being born in a free country, where every road is open, and where talents and industry are more liberally rewarded than amongst any other nation of the Universe.

"You will naturally expect that, writing from a country agitated by the storms of a Revolution, my letter should not be confined merely to us and our friends. But the truth is that in London you have perhaps a better opportunity of being informed of the general concerns of France, than in a petty provincial town in the heart of the kingdom itself. The annals of the department are all with which I have a better opportunity of being acquainted than you, provided you feel sufficient interest in informing yourself. The horrors excited by the relation of the events consequent

upon the commencement of hostilities is general. Not but that there are men who felt a gloomy satisfaction from a measure which seemed to put the patriot army out of a possibility of success. An ignominious flight, the massacre of their general, a dance performed with savage joy round his burning body, the murder of six prisoners, are events which would have arrested the attention of the reader of the annals of Morocco, or of the most barbarous of savages. The approaching summer will undoubtedly decide the fate of France. It is almost evident that the patriot army, however numerous, will be unable [to] withstand the superior discipline of their enemies. But suppose that the German army is at the gates of Paris, what will be the consequence? It will be impossible to make any material alteration in the Constitution, impossible to reinstate the clergy in their antient guilty splendour, impossible to give an existence to the *noblesse* similar to that it before enjoyed, impossible to add much to the authority of the King. Yet there are in France some [millions?]—I speak without exaggeration—who expect that this will take place.

"I shall expect your letter with impatience, though, from my general remissness, I little deserve this attention on your part. I shall return to England in the autumn or the beginning of winter. I am not without the expectation of meeting you, a circumstance which, be assured, would give me the greatest pleasure, as we might then more advantageously than by letter consult upon some literary scheme, a project which I have much at heart. Adieu. I remain, my dear Mathews,

"Your most affectionate friend,

"W. WORDSWORTH."

The only other letter known to have been written by Wordsworth in 1792 is dated Blois, September 3, and will be quoted later. The poem entitled "Vaudracour and Julia" is a disguised and curiously inverted account of his love-affair. At one time the substance of it, in manuscript, formed part of the ninth book of "The Prelude." The exaltation of a happy lover sounds triumphantly in the following lines:

Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring;
Life turned the meanest of her implements,
Before his eyes, to price above all gold;
The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine;
Her chamber-window did surpass in glory
The portals of the dawn; all Paradise
Could, by the simple opening of a door,
Let itself in upon him:—pathways, walks,
Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank,
Surcharged, within him, overblest to move
Beneath a sun that wakes a weary world
To its dull round of ordinary cares;
A man too happy for mortality!

And the following passage, like Clärchen's song in Goethe's "Egmont," utters the anxious joy of love:

Through all her courts
The vacant city slept; the busy winds,
That keep no certain intervals of rest,
Moved not; meanwhile the galaxy displayed
Her fires, that like mysterious pulses beat
Aloft; momentous but uneasy bliss!
To their full hearts the universe seemed hung
On that brief meeting's slender filament.

When Wordsworth came to Blois his political opinions were not definitely settled, and he lacked the historical knowledge and the training in social philosophy requisite to defend them. He describes his condition in "The Prelude," Book IX., lines 93-110:

I was unprepared
With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
Into a theatre, whose stage was filled
And busy with an action far advanced.
Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read
With care, the master-pamphlets of the day;*
Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
And public news; but having never seen
A chronicle that might suffice to show
Whence the main organs of the public power

* In Wordsworth's library, as catalogued after his death, was a bundle of "French Pamphlets and Ephemera"; also Rousseau's "Émile," edition of 1762, and "Confessions," edition of 1782.

LIBRARY
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Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how
Accomplished, giving thus unto events
A form and body; all things were to me
Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
Without a vital interest. At that time,
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
And the strong hand of outward violence
Locked up in quiet.

There were at that time in Orleans and Blois several of those literary and philosophical societies which were so numerous in the large French towns in the eighteenth century. Some of them were under suspicion as sources of royalist propaganda. With a kindness towards strangers which is traditional in the Orléannais and in Touraine, one or more of these academies admitted the tall, rather impressive-looking youth to their reunions. Travellers were rare, and Englishmen in high favour. By a very quick transition in the poem, Wordsworth gives the impression, although he says he "gradually withdrew" from these circles, that he turned against them suddenly, and that the conversion took place at Orleans, whereas it was in reality operated at Blois, and by slow degrees:

Night by night
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,
Whom, in the city, privilege of birth
Sequestered from the rest, societies
Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
Of good and evil of the time was shunned
With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
Became a patriot; and my heart was all
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

The steps by which he reached this position are described in the rest of the ninth book. The time was the spring and summer of 1792.

Three features of public life in Blois would necessarily interest an intelligent observer in 1792. One was the attitude taken by the garrison, which had been partly "purged" the year before, and was now serving

as a centre of Revolutionary propaganda. Another and even more dramatic feature was the conduct of Grégoire, the republican Bishop of Blois, who was one of the most eminent members of the National Convention. He was by far the most striking personality in the little city. A third feature was the political club known as the Friends of the Constitution. Two Revolutionary clubs were formed at Blois early in the preceding year, the one just mentioned and another called the Popular Society. They were presently merged under the name of the former. The organization thus constituted was the means by which the Jacobin Club of Paris exercised an influence over local affairs. It served also as a blower to the fire of Revolutionary sentiment. It sat at first in one of the halls of the abbey of St. Laumer, and afterwards in the church of the Jacobin Order, as if imitating the parent society. I have seen a manuscript roll of its members, in the Departmental Archives at Blois. They numbered nearly two hundred, and among them were persons of every walk of life, clergy and laymen, rich and poor, old men and young. Under certain restrictions the public were admitted to its meetings, which for a long time were held daily. So intense was the interest in fundamental and purely ideal questions that, even when there was no news from Paris to discuss, crowds assembled every evening to hear the debates in this club on the rights of man, the relations of Church and State, new methods of education, and the principles of government. Special and still more open sessions were held on Sunday, at which patriotic songs were sung, poems recited, and the best speeches of the week repeated. I have read the deliberations of this society, preserved in manuscript in the Library at the Château of Blois, and found in them a curious mixture of naïve enthusiasm, hopefulness, and devotion, on the one hand, and of shrewd and insolent interference with local government on the other. The fanaticism of these levellers was mitigated by a persuasion that peace and good-will were their ultimate objects.

An intelligent young foreigner would of course hear of these meetings and desire to attend them. They were the local representation of the great drama which was being enacted all over France. Wordsworth must have been specially attracted, because he already sympathized with the general movement, and also because he wished to learn French. What better exercise for his ear could he have found than these lively debates? At the best, Blois is and was a dull town. The Revolutionary club furnished an unusual opportunity for amusement as well as instruction. There were probably very few English in Blois. Joseph Jekyll, an observant youth, had found only one Englishman there in 1775.* British subjects were regarded with favour at this moment in France because their ancestors had freed themselves from tyranny and bequeathed to them a liberal government.

At the sitting of the Friends of the Constitution on February 3, 1792, "A member asked to have the floor, and proposed two Englishmen for membership, requesting that they should be dispensed from taking the oath, as foreigners and not naturalized. The matter

* My thanks are due to Mr. Thomas Hutchinson for calling my attention to "The Correspondence of Mr. Joseph Jekyll." Jekyll, a lively young man of fortune, spent many weeks at Orleans and Blois in 1775. He found the latter place anything but dull. He mentions at least fifteen French families he knew there. His acquaintance extended to the possessors of many of the great châteaux in the neighbourhood—Herbault, Menârs, Saumery, Amboise. He describes in letters to his father the gay life he led. They echo with the laughter of girls and the rhythm of dancing feet. One is reminded of the opening chapter of "Le Vicomte de Bragelonne." Though only seventeen years lay between Jekyll's visit and Wordsworth's, the last three of them must have made a vast difference. The careless gaiety of the earlier time became a thing long past, and even through Jekyll's recital of pleasure and "gallantry," through the tinkle of carnival music, we hear the approaching storm and perceive why it had to come. He watched a man being broken on the wheel in the great square of Orleans for burglary; he saw "three hundred wretches chained by the neck like dogs," some of them, who had undergone the torture, scarcely able to support themselves, pass through Blois in one day, and fed there on the ground in the market-place, on their way to the galleys at Brest. Even this light-hearted boy remarked of the country-people: "Ignorance approaches so near to barbarity, that I declare, when we inquired our way, the children kept aloof, for fear, as they said, that the strangers would hurt them."

being discussed, it was decided that they should not be admitted, but that nevertheless they might attend the meetings."*

It is possible, and, I think, even probable, that Wordsworth was one of these two Englishmen. If he was, the length of his stay at Blois becomes practically settled as not less than seven months.

In the meanwhile national events had happened of a nature to repel the indifferent rather than to make them converts. The first impetus of the Revolution had subsided. The membership of the Legislative Assembly was less distinguished and able than that of the Constituent. Its work for the first three months was limited almost entirely to the thorny and dolorous subject of punishing emigrant nobles and non-juring priests. It was decreed that all emigrant nobles who did not return by January 1, 1792, should lose their property and be condemned to death. The King vetoed this decree. Hostile armies were assembling on the northern and western borders, and negotiations, manifestly insincere, were going on between the King, in the name of the nation, and the foreign princes whose one desire was to give back to him the reality of power. There was actual danger from the royalist volunteers mobilizing, to the number of about 23,000, under the Prince of Condé at Worms. Coblentz was a centre of intrigue against the nation. There was a plot to capture Strassburg. The Assembly very naturally and correctly surmised that the King and Queen, together with the Emperor Leopold and the rulers of the South German States, were in correspondence on these subjects. After two months' retirement at Arras, his birthplace, Robespierre, "the incorruptible," returned to Paris on November 28, 1791, the very day after Wordsworth entered the city. Throughout the winter the Jacobin Club pursued a set policy of slander and suspicion, lest a reaction in favour of moderate laws and a limited monarchy should gain headway. They made the most

* "Registres de la Société des Amis de la Constitution," p. 115. Manuscript in the Library of the Château of Blois.

of the King's veto, destroying the remnants of his popularity and of that of his supporters. Lafayette resigned his military command and was defeated by the Jacobins when he stood for election as Mayor of Paris. The city was become openly republican. It recognized in the Jacobin Club a mirror of its own aspirations. A fatal alliance sprang up between the municipality and the club. The faubourgs armed themselves. The King also had collected a strong body-guard. Robespierre, in February, demanded the removal of the Haute Cour from Orleans to Paris. The absent were suspected. The Jacobins opposed war for fear a successful general might make terms with the monarchy. The Girondists, being less afraid of such a possible compromise, clamoured for war. On April 20, 1792, the King was forced to give his consent to a declaration of war against Austria. Envoys from the French Government, who were sent to solicit the good-will of Prussia, England, Spain, and Sardinia, were repulsed or coldly received. The opening of the campaign against the Austrian dominions in Belgium met with a lamentable check. A French division, panic-struck even before it saw the enemy, rushed back into Lille and murdered its general, Dillon, on April 29. This is the disaster of which Wordsworth writes to Mathews on May 17.

How the course of public affairs affected Frenchmen of rank, who, though loyal to the monarchy, were still in France, and indeed in the national army, but plotting reaction, is nowhere more graphically described than in "The Prelude":

> A band of military Officers,
> Then stationed in the city, were the chief
> Of my associates; some of these wore swords
> That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
> Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.
> In age and temper differing, they had yet
> One spirit ruling in each heart; alike
> (Save only one, hereafter to be named)
> Were bent upon undoing what was done.*

* Book IX., line 125. The whole passage, down to line 197, should be carefully read.

Such a state of mind in the army as is here depicted goes far to explain and to justify the suspicions of Robespierre and Marat, who were unwilling to give military men, at a distance from Paris, an opportunity to distinguish themselves in war. If successful, they might rehabilitate the monarchy. Defeated, they might betray their country to the foreign foe. After the King's attempt to flee in June, 1791, officers had been obliged to swear that they would obey the National Assembly. The colonel of the Bassigny regiment, which had become the 32nd Infantry, refusing to sign the oath, had been driven out of Tours, where he was then stationed, and the fact, or one like it, is alluded to in "The Prelude," IX. 181. A detachment of four companies was transferred in August of that year from Tours to Blois. It is the officers of this detachment that Wordsworth refers to. They admitted him to their society because he was an Englishman, and tolerated his criticisms because, being an Englishman, he was *un original.*

> An Englishman,
> Born in a land whose very name appeared
> To license some unruliness of mind;
> A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
> And the indulgence that a half-learnt speech
> Wins from the courteous; I, who had been else
> Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived
> With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
> And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
> To wish to bring me over to their cause.*

But he was invulnerable to their arguments. He had already become grounded in Revolutionary doctrine. The "master-pamphlets of the day" had convinced his reason. And a deeper source of strength, which made their talk seem crude and vain, was his natural indifference, bred in him from boyhood, to the social distinctions which meant so much to them. He was romantic, and would gladly have stopped his ears to politics and listened only to tales of ancient heroes or to the fall of waters and the madrigals of birds. Ex-

* "Prelude," IX, 188-197.

tremists of either side found him absent-minded when they tried to engage him. The narrow rationalism of one party and the cruel bigotry of the other, both found him smiling still at some happy thought suggested by stories or scenes of the past. Yet, when roused to controversy, he proved to be instinctively a democrat. The royalist officers sought to persuade him that their cause was just:

> But though untaught by thinking or by books
> To reason well of polity or law,
> And nice distinctions, then on every tongue,
> Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
> Of nations and their passing interests,
> (If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
> Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
> Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
> Tales of the poets, as it made the heart
> Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
> Old heroes, and their sufferings and their deeds;
> Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
> Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
> Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
> That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
> And ill could brook, beholding that the best
> Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.
> For, born in a poor district, and which yet
> Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
> Than any other nook of English ground,
> It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
> Through the whole tenour of my schoolday time,
> The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
> Was vested with attention or respect
> Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
> Of many benefits, in later years
> Derived from academic institutes
> And rules, that they held something up to view
> Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
> Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
> In honour, as in one community,
> Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
> Distinction open lay to all that came,
> And wealth and titles were in less esteem
> Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
> Add unto this, subservience from the first
> To presences of God's mysterious power
> Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,

And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty. It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
In part lay here, that unto me the events
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
A gift that was come rather late than soon.
No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,
And stung with injury, at this riper day,
Were impotent to make my hopes put on
The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
In honour to their honour; zeal, which yet
Had slumbered, now in opposition burst
Forth like a Polar summer; every word
They uttered was a dart, by counterwinds
Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
Confusion-stricken by a higher power
Than human understanding, their discourse
Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
I triumphed.*

Politics apart, the human tragedy of the war affected him profoundly. He saw the roads filled with the bravest youth of France "and all the promptest of her spirits," under arms and hastening to the north. He saw the struggle in many a family between love and patriotism. Here and there a face in the passing files of eager young men touched him with a sense of brotherhood. The martial music, the banners, quickened his blood. These moving spectacles made his heart beat high, and seemed

Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
Hater perverse of equity and truth.†

* "Prelude," IX. 198. † *Ibid.*, IX. 283.

One of the oppressive laws of the old régime had been that no soldier, however brave, however accomplished, could rise above the ranks unless he were of noble blood. Among the officers stationed at Blois, there was one who viewed the patriotic rising with the same generous feelings as the young foreigner. This was a captain in the 32nd Regiment, Michel-Armand Bacharetie Beaupuy. He was thirty-six years old, and had been in the army ever since his sixteenth year. He was born at Mussidan, about fifty miles north-east of Bordeaux, July 14, 1755, of an ancient noble family. His mother was a descendant, in the sixth generation, from the great essayist Montaigne. His three elder brothers were officers in the old army, from which two of them at least retired when the Revolution began. They were all zealous partisans of liberty, and wielded great influence in their native region, being instrumental in choosing and instructing its delegates to the Constituent Assembly. His younger brother was a priest, but favoured the Revolution. At the outbreak of the troubles this young ecclesiastic gave up an easy post as Canon of Arles and became *curé* of his native parish. He joyfully swore allegiance to the constitution in 1791. Their mother had brought up these five sons on the literature and philosophy of the eighteenth century. Their home was a centre of the new culture.

Michel, the captain at Blois, had served in many parts of France, had been promoted slowly, had read and studied much, and had lately, while on furlough, been the chief figure in the politics of Mussidan. His Revolutionary principles were grounded on a thorough examination of the social philosophy which lay behind the movement. He was a democrat in heart also. He loved the poor, and lived and laboured for their sake. The annals of the Revolution present no purer spirit, none more unselfish, gallant, genial, and hopeful. Scorned by his brother officers, he rose above them by his patient dignity. He could afford to await the verdict of time, serenely confident as he was in the justice of his cause. No other man save Coleridge had so great an

influence upon Wordsworth as this sweet and devoted patriot. Of him, no doubt, the poet thought, no matter of whom besides, when he wrote "The Character of the Happy Warrior." With his more systematic philosophy, tempered in the fire of persecution, Beaupuy came to Wordsworth's support. He turned the young man's vague idealism into firm principle. And at last the love of humanity, which had not yet found equal place in the poet's heart with love of nature, was raised to the double throne. He depicts Beaupuy, in "The Prelude," with many distinct and fine touches:

> Among that band of Officers was one,
> Already hinted at, of other mould—
> A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
> And with an oriental loathing spurned,
> As of a different caste. A meeker man
> Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
> Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
> Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
> Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
> As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
> When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
> Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
> As through a book, an old romance, or tale
> Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
> Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
> With the most noble, but unto the poor
> Among mankind he was in service bound,
> As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
> To a religious order. Man he loved
> As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
> And all the homely in their homely works,
> Transferred a courtesy which had no air
> Of condescension; but did rather seem
> A passion and a gallantry, like that
> Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
> Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,
> Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
> But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
> Diffused around him, while he was intent
> On works of love or freedom, or revolved
> Complacently the progress of a cause,
> Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
> And placid, and took nothing from the man
> That was delightful.*

* "Prelude," IX. 288.

Beaupuy was no leveller. He did not confound distinctions. He was not blind to fact. Although he evidently was a student of Jean-Jacques, he knew from experience that some men are set apart for rule and honour by their virtues and knowledge. He loved the poor and humble, but, not being an intolerant theorist, he admitted that the ignorance of the multitude who must earn their bread by manual labour debarred them from the immediate exercise of high political power.

> Oft in solitude
> With him did I discourse about the end
> Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
> Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
> Custom and habit, novelty and change;
> Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
> For patrimonial honour set apart,
> And ignorance in the labouring multitude.*

Still, at times, giving rein to pity and scorn, and employing the pompous language of the day, they indulged themselves in weaker and more feverish talk.

> But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find
> Error without excuse upon the side
> Of them who strove against us, more delight
> We took, and let this freely be confessed,
> In painting to ourselves the miseries
> Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
> Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
> The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
> True personal dignity, abideth not;
> A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
> From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
> From lowly sympathy and chastening truth:
> Where good and evil interchange their names,
> And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
> With vice at home.†

Beaupuy was Wordsworth's instructor in branches of study for which he had until then shown no aptitude. He awakened new interests, gave him social consciousness, clothed for him in garments of majestic association the history of mankind. Henceforth the poet could no

* "Prelude," IX. 321.

† *Ibid.*, 339.

longer regard the chronicles of nations as a mere quarry for romantic incidents. History, he now saw, was organic. Heroism was but the eminent outcrop of deep popular virtues and aspirations. Creeds and sects took their place with national customs, as growths unconsciously implanted and irresistibly evolved. But in all this they saw the workings of a destiny, not blind and aimless, but moving towards a glorious end.

> We summoned up the honourable deeds
> Of ancient Story,
> * * * * *
> and, finally, beheld
> A living confirmation of the whole
> Before us, in a people from the depth
> Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
> Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
> Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
> Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
> And continence of mind, and sense of right,
> Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.*

The world has never since offered to generous youth so wide a prospect. Never again has the future been so flooded with light, never have distant mountains of promise beckoned with such strong allurement. From height to height the promise flashed. It explained the past, with all its sorrow, now so full of meaning. It made any sacrifice endurable for the sake of a sure result. The pathway ahead lay golden in the sunshine. Not since the earliest days of Christianity had groups of the purest and strongest men felt so exalted, and whole communities been so uplifted. Even solitary dreamers in distant places the thrill of enthusiasm stirred. How much more, then, were they moved who lived in daily contact with actors in the mighty drama !†

He compares Beaupuy with Dion, the pupil of Plato, who headed an expedition under philosophic patronage against the tyrant of Syracuse. But there is no reason to think that he had in mind a close parallel between Beaupuy and the unfortunate Greek hero when, in

* "Prelude," IX. 364.

† *Ibid.*, 390.

1816, he wrote his poem "Dion," for even at that time, in the depths of his political and moral reaction against the Revolution, he could never have intended its last and most significant lines to apply adversely to the friend of his youth:

> Him only pleasure leads, and peace attends,
> Him, only him, a shield of Jove defends,
> Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends.

Poetry, unmindful of moral purposes and public welfare, ever and anon rebelled against his new interests. As they walked side by side through the forest along the Loire, Wordsworth wearied of those "heart-bracing colloquies," and in spite of his real fervour—and that less genuine excitement worked up within himself, as he tells us—he peopled the mysterious glades of those royal demesnes with the heroines of Ariosto and Tasso, saw Angelica upon her palfrey, and Erminia the fair fugitive, rather than the goddess Liberty. He sinned in the eyes of his stern preceptor by sighing for the hushed matin-bell, the extinguished taper, and the displaced cross, when they gazed at the ruins of a convent; he persisted in romancing about pleasure-loving kings and their mistresses, when they caught sight of ancient castles rising above the trees. Thus imagination, he tells us, often mitigated the force of civic prejudice, the bigotry of a youthful patriot's mind. Well would it have been for the over-wrought delegates in Paris if they could have escaped now and then from the fever and glare of the distracted city and let their imaginations rest, even as an interlude, upon quieter scenes; though it is to be doubted whether the sight of Chambord, with its tale of royal vice and extravagance, would have calmed them. But to Wordsworth, who had not to pay for ancient wrongs, those beautiful old palaces gave "many gleams of chivalrous delight." "Yet not the less," he declares, with a return to austerity, "not the less,"

> Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one
> Is law for all, and of that barren pride

In them who, by immunities unjust,
Between the sovereign and the people stand,
His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold
Daily upon me, mixed with pity too
And love; for where hope is, there love will be
For the abject multitude.*

The one unmistakable note in the pompous harmonies and crashing discords of the Revolution was hope. He alone who has hope, who believes in human perfectibility, will have the motive and the courage to love mankind in spite of all its blemishes. The essence of Toryism is despair of human nature. The essence of the Revolutionary or progressive spirit is trust in human nature. The last sentence of the lines just quoted is an epitome of that philosophy which animated France and which made the Revolution a religious movement. For whether in good or in evil, it was religious. Its good sprang from unselfish devotion to universal aims, to impersonal ideals. Its evil came rarely from self-seeking or littleness, but almost wholly from fanatical attachment to general principles. Robespierre was as religious as Mahomet. In Beaupuy an original sweetness of disposition kept his love for the poor from turning into hate for their oppressors. He was earnest in his search for a remedy, but not vindictive. He had no fear of failure, and could therefore exercise some patience. He felt sure that most men were with him and that their united efforts must succeed. Examples of misery were not wanting, and Beaupuy used them as texts for discourses which established Wordsworth in his republican faith.

When we chanced
One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
Who crept along fitting her languid gait
Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
In agitation said, " 'Tis against *that*

* " Prelude," IX. 501.

That we are fighting," I with him believed
That a benignant spirit was abroad
Which might not be withstood, that poverty
Abject as this would in a little time
Be found no more, that we should see the earth
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
All institutes for ever blotted out
That legalized exclusion, empty pomp
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
Whether by edict of the one or few;
And finally, as sum and crown of all,
Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws; whence better days
To all mankind.*

It was Beaupuy, also, who told Wordsworth the story of Vaudracour and Julia, as an instance of the bigotry of birth that France was weary of. At least, so we read in "The Prelude." Many years afterwards, Wordsworth said to a friend who was collecting notes on his poems, Miss Isabella Fenwick, that "Vaudracour and Julia" was "faithfully narrated, though with the omission of many pathetic circumstances, from the mouth of a French lady, who had been an eye-and-ear witness of all that was done and said." And he added, using a name which does not occur in the poem: "Many long years after, I was told that Dupligne was then a monk in the Convent of La Trappe." The poem was composed not later than 1804 as an episode in "The Prelude." It was, however, on account of its length, published separately in 1820, with the remark: "The facts are true; no invention as to these has been exercised, as none was needed."

In the same registers at Blois in which I found the

* "Prelude," IX. 509. Curiously enough, Joseph Jekyll, the young English traveller, seventeen years before, had remarked the same evidence of poverty in the country about Blois. He says: "The peasants of this part of France are miserably poor. The girls who herd the cows are always at work with their distaffs, and the cap is always clean, and perhaps laced, while the feet are without shoes and stockings." The poor, he declares, lived upon bread and water from Monday till Sunday, and bread was very dear.

motion to admit two Englishmen into the Society of the Friends of the Constitution, on February 3, 1792, I have discovered what appear to be traces of Beaupuy's activity. On January 22 of the same year, it is recorded that "one of our brothers of the 32nd Regiment, an officer, read a very eloquent discourse on political distrust, showing how dangerous it was when it exceeded the limits of that proper watchfulness necessary in all good citizens." The officer's name is almost illegible, but seems to be Beaupuy or Beaupuis. On January 29 he read his speech a second time, and was freshly applauded. An officer of the same regiment, sometimes mentioned as the 32nd, and sometimes under its old name Bassigny, is referred to several times in the next three or four months, but not by name. The club appears to have become attached particularly to Brissot and his faction in Paris, who were moderates.

It is almost necessary to believe that Wordsworth, a lonely young man, must have haunted the daily meetings of the Revolutionary club. They provided entertainment and excitement in a town otherwise dull—too large for rural beauty, too busy with petty retail trade to invite a genial expansion of the soul, a town sunk in a maddening monotony of small comforts. But into this unpromising garden a seed had fallen from the wings of Freedom. A vigorous plant had sprung up, exotic, and yet so well adapted to the soil as to draw to itself the elements of life slumbering round about. There was now one important hour of day and one interesting place. A spirited young man of twenty-one, unless restrained by scruples or prejudices, would naturally avail himself of the opportunity thus offered. Curiosity would induce him to visit the club; sympathy with its objects might easily make him wish to join it. And even if for no other reason than to perfect himself in the French language, he would be attracted to these daily meetings.

Fancy would fain reconstruct the scene: the vaulted church, destitute of altar, shrine, and image, its darkness rendered visible with guttering candles, which cast

" a little glooming light, much like a shade "; the platform draped in red, white, and blue; Bishop Grégoire in the choir, wearing his violet episcopal vestments to indicate that, though a Revolutionist, he was a Churchman still; one of those painstaking secretaries at his side whose handwriting we have been deciphering; " nos frères," both civil and military, sitting below, and " nos sœurs " in the gallery, waving each one a copy of the new patriotic hymn. Captain Michel Beaupuy, divested of the haughty air belonging to his birth and his old training, and clad in the new uniform of a republican regiment, ascends the rostrum and begins an impassioned speech. And at the edge of the crowd, that tall English youth, hanging on his words and kindling with the double enthusiasm of friendship and zeal for a great cause, is William Wordsworth !

Wordsworth tells us, in the autobiographical memoranda, that he was still at Blois when the King was dethroned—August 10, 1792. We cannot doubt that, at the time, he rejoiced in this event, in spite of the massacre of the Swiss Guards which accompanied it. The Duke of Brunswick had, on July 26, issued an insolent manifesto, declaring that he was coming, in the name of the kings of Europe, to restore Louis XVI. to authority. Maddened by this declaration, and goaded by Danton, Marat, and Robespierre, who saw their opportunity to establish a republic, the people of Paris, together with large delegations from all parts of the country, invaded the Tuileries, slaughtered eight hundred of the King's defenders, and drove him to take refuge in the hall of the Legislative Assembly, whence he was sent to prison. On August 25 news reached Paris that the Prussians had entered Longwy. Next came reports that Verdun had fallen, that it had been treacherously surrendered, that the enemy were within one hundred and fifty miles of Paris. At once the unscrupulous fanatics of the Jacobin Club seized control of the city government and sent a band of hired assassins to the prisons. In five days, from the 2nd to the 6th of September, more than nine hundred helpless men, women,

and children, were butchered. The madness spread to Versailles, Rheims, Meaux, Lyons, and Orleans, where Wordsworth was at the time, as he tells us in the autobiographical memoranda.

Beaupuy had already, before the beginning of August, accompanied his regiment into Lower Alsace. The friends had parted, never to meet again. Wordsworth, years afterwards, heard and believed a false report of Beaupuy's death in the war of the Vendée, and wrote, in "The Prelude":*

> He perished fighting, in supreme command,
> Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,
> For liberty, against deluded men,
> His fellow-countrymen; and yet most blessed
> In this, that he the fate of later times
> Lived not to see, nor what we now behold,
> Who have as ardent hearts as he had then.

It is true that Beaupuy was spared the sight of France ruled by an emperor, which is what Wordsworth saw with horror in 1804 when he wrote these lines. But he did not die fighting against the Vendean Royalists. The report probably originated in the fact that he was severely wounded at the battle of Château-Gonthier, October 27, 1793, when commanding the advance-guard of the Army of the West. He had meanwhile shared the glory and the persecutions of the Army of Mayence, victorious on the Rhine, calumniated on the Seine. His advancement had been rapid. Of mature age, though retaining the cheerfulness and vivacity of youth, unequalled for daring, noted even in the republican army as a man of strong convictions, he had survived the jealousy of the Jacobins, in spite of his noble birth and eminent achievements. Within a year after Wordsworth left France, his soldier hero was a general of division. His life was too busy and communications were too much interrupted to admit of correspondence between the friends, and Wordsworth never knew of his distinguished career as chief of staff of the Army

* Book IX., line 424.

of the West and general in the army of the Rhine and Moselle. He was killed in battle, October 19, 1797, and buried near Neuf-Brisach, east of Colmar.

From his journal, it is apparent that he was impulsive and sincere, self-confident but competent. After a scene that reminds one of some brave passage in the "Iliad," in which he snatches a sword from a Prussian officer and personally causes the retreat of two battalions of the enemy, he concludes: "This affair proves the superiority true Republicans will always have over the satellites of despots!" He never lost an opportunity to sow the good seed. At parleys with hostile outposts, during negotiations with German officers, in conversations with prisoners, he was careful to let fall a word in season, and has recorded the occasions. "I have," he writes, "never neglected these chances. I have seriously performed the oath of my apostleship whenever possible. I have always tried to tear away the thick veil of blindness from the eyes of these Germans. They are not made for freedom, I know; but, after all, some grains, I hope, will sprout."

Besides such preliminary work as Wordsworth may have done on "Vaudracour and Julia," it is not known that he wrote any poetry at Blois and Orleans, except "Descriptive Sketches." Much of the greater part of this poem was composed during his walks on the banks of the Loire, in the years 1791, 1792, and the dates are confirmed in his own handwriting on the margin of a copy which was kindly lent to me by Professor George Herbert Palmer, of Harvard University. As we shall see, this poem reflects the principles and feelings that he describes in "The Prelude" as having been his at that time. He was careful, later, to moderate some of its language. In the first edition the author's sympathy with the Revolutionary tendency is unmistakable, and it is this early version that students of Wordsworth should read, rather than the expurgated text. A letter directing his brother Richard how to send him a sum of money concludes as follows, and fixes a date after which he left Blois to return to Orleans:

"BLOIS,
"*September* 3.

"DEAR BROTHER,

". . . I look forward to the time of seeing you, Wilkinson, and my other friends, with pleasure. I am very happy you have got into chambers, as I shall perhaps be obliged to stay a few weeks in town about my publication; you will, I hope, with Wilkinson's permission, find me a place for a bed. Give Wilkinson my best compts. I have apologies to make for not having written to him, as also to almost all my other friends—I rely on their indulgence. I shall be in town during the course of the month of October. Adieu, Adieu; you will send me the money immediately.

"W. WORDSWORTH."

[Post mark: BLOIS *Se* 10.92
Addressed to MR. WORDSWORTH.
A. PARKINS, Esq.,
G. P. OFF.,
LONDON, ANGLETERRE.

Endorsed by RICH. WORDSWORTH	10 *Septr.* 1792. W. WORDSWORTH to RD. WORDSWORTH.	Letter from Blois about money.]

Wordsworth did not carry out his intention of returning to London in October. It seems likely that he spent part at least of that month at Orleans. In a passage of "Descriptive Sketches," beginning at line 740 in the original edition, with the apostrophe to the country of the Loire,

> And thou ! fair favoured region ! which my soul
> Shall love, till Life has broke her golden bowl,

he describes the "October clouds," and the exquisite description with which the tenth book of "The Prelude" opens, of the "beautiful and silent day" on which he bade farewell to the gliding Loire, recalls October with its "many-coloured woods."

He must have rejoiced when the good news came of the defeat of the Prussians at Valmy, on September 20. Goethe was with the invaders. France had attracted those two great poets from neighbouring lands, but how differently ! Goethe, middle-aged, rich in achieve-

ments and honours, a pensioner of an old-fashioned court, came to observe, to criticize, to judge, the insane struggles of the French; Wordsworth, little more than a boy, free of foot, open-minded, thoughtless of his own advancement, and glowing with generous hopes for mankind—the English poet has every advantage romance can confer.

The day after the battle of Valmy the Revolution entered upon its third legislative stage, with the opening of the Convention. At once the Republic was declared. Even in 1804 the poet still felt the stir of exultation, when he narrated the repulse of the invading host:

> Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was written
> The tender mercies of the dismal wind.*

Rash men, the princes of the north had seen their quarry turn into avengers from whose wrath they fled in terror.

> Disappointment and dismay
> Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
> With evil expectations; confidence
> And perfect triumph for the better cause.†

Cheered, he tells us, with hope that the crimes of early September were but ephemeral monsters, and elate with confidence in the Republic, Wordsworth returned to the "fierce Metropolis." With ardour hitherto unfelt, he ranged over the city, visiting the scenes of recent note, passing the prison where lay the dethroned monarch, walking through the half-ruined palace of the Tuileries, dazed by what he saw, and unable to conceive its meaning. But that night the sense of danger leaped upon him from out the dark: he remembered what Paris could do. St. Bartholomew, the September massacres, and what next? He saw the Terror striding out of future time. "That night," he writes,

> I felt most deeply in what world I was,
> What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.
> High was my room and lonely, near the roof
> Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge
> That would have pleased me in more quiet times;

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* "Prelude," X. 13. † *Ibid.*, 27.

Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by one little month,
Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up
From tragic fictions or true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments.
The horse is taught his manège, and no star
Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
For the spent hurricane the air provides
As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
But to return out of its hiding-place
In the great deep; all things have second birth;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
And in this way I wrought upon myself,
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance
Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
But vainly comments of a calmer mind
Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.*

Next day these direful presentiments no doubt vanished or faded in the brightness of dawn. He went forth eagerly through the still unawakened streets to the centre of excitement, the long arcades of the Palais Royal. Here the daily throng was already shouting, and above the general noise he heard the shrill cries of hawkers, "Denunciation of the crimes of Maximilian Robespierre." And into his hand they thrust printed copies of the speech in which Louvet, the Girondist, had essayed to overthrow the Jacobin leader on October 29. From the futility of this charge Wordsworth foresaw that liberty and life and death would soon lie in the hands of those who ruled the capital; he clearly saw the issue and who were the real combatants:

* "Prelude," X. 63. Though I quote this passage here, I believe the feelings expressed in it are more likely to have been experienced by Wordsworth ten or eleven months later during a visit which I think he made to Paris in October, 1793, and of which I shall try to present some evidence in a later chapter.

The indecision on their part whose aim
Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
Who in attack or in defence were strong
Through their impiety.*

Yet did he not for a moment lose trust that all would end well. He had no fear for the ultimate safety of France; what distressed him was delay and her loss of opportunity to do a work of honour, a work that should attract and enamour the nations of the world. And, in a startling passage, he avows that he dreamed—or did he really form a plan?—of offering his life to the cause. Leader or sacrifice, it mattered not which, he would give himself to France. From the solidity of his character we are bound to infer that he would never have mentioned these thoughts had they not been more than passing fancies. They must have taken firm consistency in his mind, and perhaps have grown into active purposes. Modesty struggles with a desire to tell the truth in these deeply-considered lines. He avows that he was urged by a heroic impulse, but gives the credit to Reason working irresistibly through him. He tells us that he thought of means of opposing the Jacobin power, and of remedies; and among them this:

An insignificant stranger and obscure,
And one, moreover, little graced with power
Of eloquence even in my native speech,
And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,
Yet would I at this time with willing heart
Have undertaken for a cause so great
Service however dangerous. I revolved,
How much the destiny of Man had still
Hung upon single persons; that there was,
Transcendent to all local patrimony,
One nature, as there is one sun in heaven;
That objects, even as they are great, thereby
Do come within the reach of humblest eyes;
That Man is only weak through his mistrust
And want of hope where evidence divine
Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure;
Nor did the inexperience of my youth
Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong

* "Prelude," X. 130.

In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
Is for Society's unreasoning herd
A domineering instinct.*

These are the lessons of Beaupuy; applied by a young foreigner to himself, they are the reflections of a hero. Had Wordsworth followed his impulse, it is not impossible that an instinct of command, of which he professed himself conscious, might have led him to some act of melancholy renown. He had great self-control, tenacity, courage, enthusiasm, and depth of conviction. These qualities would have been recognized and honoured, perhaps with a martyr's death. Whatever we may imagine as to the possible consequences, there can be no doubt about the perfect sincerity of the disclosure. It probably understates rather than exaggerates the pitch of his ambition.

Then, as he wrote originally in a passage of "The Prelude" which he afterwards altered, he declares:

In this frame of mind
Reluctantly to England I returned,
Compelled by nothing less than absolute want
Of funds for my support, else, well assured
That I both was and must be of small worth,
No better than an alien in the Land,
I doubtless should have made a common cause
With some who perished, haply perished too,
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering.

His nephew, in the "Memoirs," says: "If he had remained longer in the French capital, he would, in all probability, have fallen a victim among the Brissotins, with whom he was intimately connected." This last phrase can hardly have been written at random. With whom, among the section of the Girondists who followed Brissot's leadership, was the poet intimately connected? Affairs in France were more interesting than ever, shortly before the close of the year 1792, and there was as yet no danger for Englishmen there. The Republican army was everywhere victorious. On November 18

* "Prelude," X. 148.

the Convention passed a motion declaring that the French Republic desired the liberty of all other nations and would assist them to gain it. This decree, and still more the declaration that the River Scheldt, which was previously kept closed by treaty in the interest of London, was free to the commerce of the world, and an order to Dumouriez to invade Holland, were of course provocations to the British Government, but war was still not declared. December was filled with preliminaries for the King's trial and with the trial itself. He was beheaded on January 21. Before that date Wordsworth had left Paris, and on the first of February France declared war against England.

Naturally enough, Dorothy Wordsworth suffered some anxiety on her brother's account, as he was absent much longer than she had expected. As early as May 6, 1792, she expressed in a letter to Jane Pollard, only a small fragment of which has been published, her hope of seeing William in London, on her way from Forncett to Windsor in July:

"William is still in France, and I begin to wish he was in England. He assures me, however, that he is perfectly safe, but as we hear daily accounts of insurrections and broils, I cannot be quite easy, though I think he is wise enough to get out of the way of danger."

In a letter from Windsor, postmarked October 19, 1792, she says: "My brother William is still in France."

On December 15, at Orleans, Anne Caroline, daughter of William Wordsworth and Marie Anne Vallon, was baptized, having been born that same day. Her father, who was absent, was represented by a proxy and acknowledged her over his signature, which the clerk set down as "William Wordwodsth, anglais."

CHAPTER VI

A REVOLUTIONIST IN ENGLAND

THE poet dismissed the next three years in one sentence of his autobiographical memoranda:

> "I came home before the execution of the King, and passed the subsequent time among my friends in London and elsewhere, till I settled with my only sister at Racedown in Dorsetshire, in the year 1796." [Really 1795.]

Yet this period of his life was full of consequence for him. It was his time of storm and stress. Largely because of what he underwent between 1792 and 1796 he became one of the voices of his age. Much of the interest and value of his poetry depends upon our knowing its less immediate meaning, its political and philosophical import. If his own account of these critical formative years is provokingly meagre, all other accounts are scanty enough. Our chief dependence is upon a series of letters to his friend Mathews. "The Prelude" itself, hitherto full of significant detail, passes rapidly and vaguely over the time that followed his return from France. Of course, "The Excursion" is an elaborate commentary on his inner life during those years, but our appreciation of "The Excursion" is enhanced by every item of knowledge concerning his goings and comings, his plans and efforts. "The Excursion" is scarcely less autobiographical than "The Prelude." It is the most profound and sensitive comment literature has made upon the most tremendous social upheaval of modern times. And its depth, its truth, its feeling, are due to the fact that it reflects the sympathy and repulsion of a passionate soul who had lived what he wrote. Yet one reason why this great poem has failed, as it undoubtedly has failed, to make

an impression on many readers who thoroughly enjoy "The Prelude," is that the poet had been too reticent.

Wordsworth's position on returning to England, and for nearly three years afterwards, was extremely uncomfortable. He had no home, and was obliged to live with friends and relatives. He had no profession, and was less inclined than ever to become a clergyman, thus disappointing his family. His principles were abhorrent to them. He was a republican. He was not orthodox. He led an unsettled life. His uncles were irritated by his conduct. There is nothing to prove that he had much to do with his brother Richard, who was established as a solicitor in London. Christopher was at Cambridge, and John at sea. But his sister's faith in him never faltered. Her enthusiasm for his character, her romantic interest in his doings, never grew less. He did not visit her on his return. In her letter of August 30, 1793, to Jane Pollard, she says: "It is nearly three years since my brother and I parted. It will be exactly three years when we meet again." The passage in her letter of June 16, 1793, where she writes: "It was in winter (at Christmas) that he was last at Forncett," refers to the vacation in 1790-91, just before he took his degree. Still cherishing the idea that he was to enter the ranks of the clergy, she fondly pictured herself living with him at last in their own little parsonage. Comparing Christopher with William, she writes on February 16, with her gift of discrimination:

> "He is like William, with the same traits in his character, but less highly touched. He is not so ardent in any of his pursuits, but is attached to the same ones which have so irresistible an influence over William that they deprive him of the power of chaining his attention to others discordant with his feelings."

These are words which paint a portrait. His qualities *highly touched*, his ardour, his impatience with uncongenial pursuits, are marks of a poetic temperament. Miss Pollard may not have been interested in these effusions, but how charming is the writer's confidence

that nothing which concerns her wonderful brother can be tedious! Christopher, she continues, "is steady and sincere in his attachments," and then she makes haste to add:

"William has both these virtues in an eminent degree; and a sort of violence, if I may so term it, which demonstrates itself every day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men."

Then she gives free rein to her fancy, depicting the life with William for which she longed:

"I look forward to the happiness of receiving you in my little parsonage. I hope you will spend at least a year with me. I have laid the particular scheme of happiness for each season. When I think of winter, I hasten to furnish our little parlour. I close the shutters, set out the tea-table, brighten the fire. When our refreshment is ended, I produce our work, and William brings his book to our table, and contributes at once to our instruction and amusement; and, at intervals, we lay aside the book, and each hazard observations on what has been read, without the fear of ridicule or censure. We talk over past days. We do not sigh for any pleasures beyond our humble habitation,—'the central place of all our joys.' With such romantic dreams I amuse my fancy during many an hour which would otherwise pass heavily along; for kind as are my uncle and aunt, much as I love my cousins, I cannot help heaving many a sigh at the reflection that I have passed one-and-twenty years of my life, and that the first six years only of that time were spent in the enjoyment of the same pleasures that were enjoyed by my brothers, and that I was then too young to be sensible of the blessing. We have been endeared to each other by early misfortune. We in the same moment lost a father, a mother, a home. We have been equally deprived of our patrimony by the cruel hand of lordly tyranny. These afflictions have all contributed to unite us closer by the bonds of affection, notwithstanding we have been compelled to spend our youth far asunder."

Immediately upon arriving in England, Wordsworth busied himself with preparing for the press his first volume of poetry, "Descriptive Sketches," which was printed very early in 1793 and followed immediately by a second slim volume entitled "An Evening Walk." The numerous errors in both books, and Miss Wordsworth's expression of regret that her brother had not shown his poems to some friend for criticism before publication, prove that they were printed in haste.

In a letter to Jane Pollard dated February 16, Miss Wordsworth, after a pathetic complaint that she is still separated from her brothers, says:

"By this time you have doubtless seen my brother William's poems. . . . The scenes which he describes have been viewed with a poet's eye, and are pourtrayed with a poet's pencil, and the poems contain many passages exquisitely beautiful; but they also contain many faults, the chief of which is obscurity, and a too frequent use of some particular expressions and uncommon words."

And she mentions "viewless" and "moveless," the former of which occurs four times in "Descriptive Sketches," and once in "An Evening Walk," and the latter once in "Descriptive Sketches," and twice in "An Evening Walk"—in the original editions, of course.

"I regret exceedingly," she continues, "that he did not submit these works to the inspection of some friend before their publication, and he also joins with me in this regret. Their faults are such as a young poet was most likely to fall into, and least likely to discover, and what the suggestions of a friend would easily have made him see and at once correct. It is, however, an error he will never fall into again, as he is well aware that he would have gained considerably more credit if the blemishes of which I speak had been corrected. My brother Kit and I, while he was at Forncett, amused ourselves by analyzing every line, and prepared a very bulky criticism, which he was to transmit to William as soon as he could have added to it the remarks of a Cambridge friend."

It is possible that this friend was Coleridge. In Christopher Wordsworth's diary, under date of Tuesday, November 5, 1793, occurs the following delightful entry:

"Roused about nine o'clock by Bilsborrow and Le-Grice with a proposal to become member of a literary society: the members they mentioned as having already come into the plan Coleridge, *Jes.*, Satterthwaite, Rough, and themselves, *Trin. C.*, and Franklin, *Pembroke*. . . . Got all into a box [at a coffee-house] and (having met with the Monthly Review of my Brother's Poems), entered into a good deal of literary and critical conversation on Dr. Darwin, Miss Seward, Mrs. Smith, Bowles, and my Brother. Coleridge spoke of the esteem in which my Brother was holden by a society at Exeter,* of which Downman and Hole were members, as did Bilsborrow (as he had before told me) of his repute with Dr. Darwin, Miss Seward, etc., etc., at Derby. Coleridge talked Greek, Max. Tyrius he told us, and spouted out of Bowles."

William Bowles and Erasmus Darwin were poets held in high esteem at that time. Bowles occupied the exalted post in Coleridge's mind which Wordsworth was to fill later. With all allowance for Coleridge's readiness to take fire, he cannot be charged with want of discernment in his literary enthusiasms. It means much that he should have perceived in Wordsworth's earliest notes the qualities of freshness and naturalness which he felt in Bowles. As the quotation from Christopher's diary shows, the first impact of Wordsworth's spirit upon Coleridge, an occurrence memorable in the history of poetry and of criticism, probably took place before the autumn of 1793. Coleridge visited his family at Ottery St. Mary in the long vacation of that year. Passing through Exeter, he may have heard the "society" of which he spoke expressing their esteem of Wordsworth's poetry, or, as is far more likely, he may

* Mr. Thomas Hutchinson, editor of the Oxford "Wordsworth," discovered that a literary society of twelve members was founded at Exeter in 1786 by Hugh Downman and Jackson, the organist of the cathedral, and that a volume of the essays and verses read at the weekly meetings was published in 1796.

have carried one of the volumes with him from London or Cambridge, and "spouted" the lines of a strange new poet to a wondering provincial audience, himself creating, and perhaps retaining exclusive possession of, the enthusiasm. He tells us in the "Biographia Literaria" that during his first Cambridge vacation he "assisted a friend in a contribution for a literary society in Devonshire."

The two poems which so stirred Coleridge were subjected by Wordsworth to much revision in later editions. This is unfortunate, for their intrinsic merit is at least equalled by their value as a record of his early powers. In considering them, I shall therefore refer always to the editions of 1793. M. Legouis, who has applied to the study of these two poems his truly wonderful knowledge of our literature, and has traced to many diverse sources their diction, their turns of thought, their allusions, however faint, says that "An Evening Walk" belongs, as regards the style of its composition, to Wordsworth's Cambridge days. This is doubtless true. The poem carries us back, indeed, to Hawkshead. Not only its subject, but its substance in detail, recalls the sleeping lakes and cloud-capped hills of Cumberland. It yields no evidence of foreign travel or of interest in public affairs. Its curiously compounded literary flavour could never have been concocted in France, where its author must have been almost wholly deprived of English books. For there is scarcely any other poem in our language so artificially constructed, so full of echoes from older writings. It contains every device of the most extreme "poetic licence," every contrivance by which poets of the descriptive school, from Denham to Goldsmith, rendered their own labour light and the task of their readers heavy. Personification, inversion, ellipsis, apostrophe, periphrasis, and all the unnatural pomp of a specially reserved rhetoric, abound in these few hundred lines. The mere diction is far less artificial than the grammar, and very frequently the plain and appropriate word is used with a certain naïve courage. But the sentences are constructed in ways sanctioned

neither by common practice nor by the venerable usage of great poets. Spenser is less loose, Milton less complex, Shakespeare less broken. The young author showed a rare audacity, or perhaps one should say ignorance of danger, in the length and unsparing fulness of his phrase. He was determined, evidently, to express his thoughts at whatever cost. It is unjust to his great predecessors to hint that their example excuses his excess. In diction, and in diction only, is he indebted to them. Reminiscences of Shakespeare, and particularly of Milton, run like a sweet undertone through the whole poem. Some of the best things in "An Evening Walk" are echoes of "Comus," which has ever been a mine of precious phrases and charming images. Wordsworth himself, in footnotes in the original edition, acknowledged his indebtedness for words, phrases, and images, to Spenser, to Tasso, to the French poet Rosset, to Thomson, to Beattie, to Young, to Burns, to Greenwood, author of a "Poem on Shooting," and to Clark, author of "A Survey of the Lakes." Various quotations are encrusted in "An Evening Walk," among them one from Collins. The most beautiful, and one might have said, the most Wordsworthian lines in the poem,

> The song of mountain streams, unheard by day,
> Now scarcely heard, beguiles my homeward way,

were taken without acknowledgment from Dr. John Brown's (1715-1766) Dedication to Mr. Romney of Cumberland's "Ode to the Sun." Many years afterwards, in his "Guide to the Lakes," Wordsworth quotes with praise the passage from Brown's poem, ending as follows:

> Nor voice, nor sound, broke on the deep serene;
> But the soft murmur of swift-gushing rills,
> Forth issuing from the mountain's distant steep,
> (Unheard till now, and now scarce heard) proclaim'd
> All things at rest, and imag'd the still voice
> Of quiet, whispering in the ear of night.

Though written in heroic couplets, the poem is not remarkable for point and vigour. Indeed, being descriptive, such a semblance of point and vigour as the versification necessarily produces tends to break the pictures into a series of short glimpses of equal length. If the author had, at the time he began his poem, been acquainted with the best models which had recently appeared, with Cowper's "Task" (1785), for example, or at least if he had appreciated them, he would scarcely have chosen the heroic couplet as a medium of description.

Has the poem, then, no distinction? Is it in no way superior to other descriptive compositions of that time, in no way indicative of the birth of an original mind? Remembering the enthusiasm of Coleridge, we can do no less than look below the diction and the versification for some deeper quality. And here we find an occasional directness of observation, an occasional freshness of energy, which are indeed worthy of note. The poem is scarcely more than a series of ill-connected pictures, but these pictures, one feels, are records of real sensations. This is the beginning of naturalness. No one could doubt that the writer had seen most of the things he described. And the episode of the mother with her starving children, which was evidently imagined, not remembered, charms by another quality which pervades the poem—namely, a sort of moral fervour. It is quite likely that this passage, which may be readily detached from its context, was written after Wordsworth's return from France. It reveals an interest in the victims of war keener than he would have felt before that time. The fact that all the pictures are scenes from humble life only reminds us of the democratic simplicity of his early days. Coleridge must, I think, have felt the startling power of imagination in the word "tremulous," when the poem speaks of

> the roar
> That stuns the tremulous cliffs of high Lodore.

He must have realized how faithful was the poet's effort to reproduce a natural scene, with its peculiar

atmosphere and even its movement, in the following lines:

> When in the south, the wan noon brooding still,
> Breathed a pale steam around the glaring hill,
> And shades of deep embattled clouds were seen
> Spotting the northern cliffs with lights between,

and the rest of the passage. The "subtle sunbeams" that shine in "the dark-brown bason" of the water-brook would arrest his eye, when perchance he had just smiled at the author's conveyance of Milton's epithet "huddling" from "Comus." Perhaps in his native Devonshire he may have witnessed some equivalent for the way the wise sheep-dogs of the Lake country are directed from a distance by their masters, which Wordsworth describes in plain language, with only one inversion, one abbreviation, one substitution of an adjective for an adverb, and one obscure term:

> Waving his hat, the shepherd in the vale
> Directs his winding dog the cliffs to scale,
> That, barking busy 'mid the glittering rocks,
> Hunts, where he points, the intercepted flocks.

The description of the swans, especially that of the female, who "in a mother's care, her beauty's pride forgets," is worthy of a place in almost any bucolic poem, and fairly triumphs over the cruel restrictions of the rhymed couplet. In the account of the soldier's widow, one is struck by the line,

> On cold blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed,

which strangely resembles the lines of Burns's "First Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet":

> To lie in kilns and barns at e'en
> When banes are crazed, and bluid is thin,
> Is, doubtless, great distress!

and by the poor woman's first-born child being called, in a phrase worthy of Dante, "her elder grief." It is hardly possible that Wordsworth was the first poet to speak of a boat moving slowly over rippling water as a

"talking boat," but I do not remember to have seen the expression elsewhere. His line,

> The tremulous sob of the complaining owl,

exactly hits the plaintive note of that misunderstood bird. The couplet,

> Fair Spirits are abroad; in sportive chase
> Brushing with lucid wands the water's face,

is what Wordsworth himself would have termed an expression of fancy, not of imagination. It is highly artificial, but how charming, how like our elder poets! Finally, Coleridge could *not* have understood, but Dorothy would read through brimming tears the heart-felt petition of the poet for a humble home,

> Where we, my friend, to golden days shall rise,
> Till our small share of hardly-paining sighs
> (For sighs will ever trouble human breath)
> Creep hush'd into the tranquil breast of Death.

This was what she longed for, and these lines bore to her the private message and signature of her brother.

"Descriptive Sketches" had a quite different origin from that of "An Evening Walk." It was conceived later, and drawn from sources more widely scattered and less intimately known. It dates in no sense from an earlier occasion than the vacation journey with Jones on the Continent. Its general plan is very simple. We have first a passage commending foot-travel, then an extremely brief summary in eight lines of the march through France, followed by a series of loosely connected pictures—the Grande Chartreuse, the Lake of Como, a storm in the Alps, other Swiss scenes—and finally the praise of poverty, simplicity, liberty, and republicanism. Many of the same extravagances of diction which amaze the reader of "An Evening Walk" mar the second work also. There is, however, less borrowing from other poets. The sentence-structure is even more arbitrary and confused. The musical effects are, naturally, more ambitious and more varied, though many blemishes may be detected by any sensi-

tive ear. The "picturesque," a term which Wordsworth scornfully rejected, but which is the only one really applicable to his chief efforts in this piece, is achieved by violence, but it is achieved. There are many striking scenes, and some which charm by their completeness and inner harmony. In "An Evening Walk" the human element was supplied by the soldier's widow and her children, by an occasional shepherd or swain, and chiefly by personifying every object and idea mentioned. In "Descriptive Sketches" the widow reappears as a gipsy of the Grisons, with her babe, wandering over the mountains in a storm by night. We have alluring maidens, whose charms were much reduced in later editions. Personification is still carried to excess; and in the second half of the poem a new element, scarcely foreshadowed at all in "An Evening Walk," appears and dominates the work. This is the cause of Man as Man, and to see how it swept the poet on a new current away from his original design, we must read, not the softened conclusion in late editions, but the lines as they were first printed.

To consider once more for a moment the workmanship of the poem, it must be admitted that in general composition or ordering of parts it lacks unity; and although I think M. Legouis sometimes strains a point in attempting to show that this or that word or phrase was borrowed, there can be no doubt that he has convicted Wordsworth of astonishing verbal dependence upon poetic tradition, and, indeed, of having chosen bad models and exceeded their faults. Furthermore, not even by making allowance for the poet's youth and exuberance can we escape being astounded by the depths of his obscurity and the heights of his audacity. Can anyone represent to himself "Silence, on her night of wing"? Can anyone read without a smile, in the account of the riots and gunfire at the Grande Chartreuse,

> The thundering tube the aged angler hears,
> And swells the groaning torrent with his tears?

The full enormity of the following lines is withheld from a reverent reader of Wordsworth until dogged syntax

insists that "his" can have no other antecedent than "infant Rhine." "Shall we," the poet writes,

> led where Via-Mala's chasms confine
> Th' indignant waters of the infant Rhine,
> Bend o'er th' abyss ?—the else impervious gloom
> His burning eyes with fearful light illume.

Describing a chamois-hunter cut off from retreat by slippery rocks, he imparts a singular piece of information with an outrageous figure of speech:

> To wet the peak's impracticable sides
> He opens of his feet the sanguine tides,
> Weak and more weak the issuing current eyes
> Lapp'd by the panting tongue of thirsty skies.

A tone more formal and dogmatic than any yet prompted by his native independence begins to show itself in the second half of the poem. A corresponding change in style appears. The following lines might have been written by the hand of Pope recalled to life for the purpose of condensing into maxims the philosophy of Rousseau:

> Once Man entirely free, alone and wild,
> Was bless'd as free—for he was Nature's child.
> He, all superior but his God disdain'd,
> Walk'd none restraining, and by none restrain'd,
> Confess'd no law but what his reason taught,
> Did all he wish'd, and wish'd but what he ought.

From this he proceeds to celebrate the ancient victories of the Swiss over the Austrians, and thence comes to depict the "homely pleasures," the contentment, and the hardships of the mountaineers.

I think it has never been remarked that the poem contains a distinct confession of religious unbelief. Yet this is plainly the meaning of four lines which conclude the passage describing a pilgrimage to the shrine of Einsiedeln. Addressing the credulous worshippers, he cries:

> Without one hope her written griefs to blot,
> Save in the land where all things are forgot,
> My heart, alive to transports long unknown,
> Half wishes your delusion were its own.

Humane aspirations begin to crowd upon the images of nature with which till now he has been content. The mention of Chamonix makes him remember that Savoy is not free, and political enslavement, he knows, means poverty.

With a truer understanding of political economy than those possess who argue that the extravagance of the rich gives employment to the poor, he perceives that luxury in one place entails misery in another:

> In the wide range of many a weary round,
> Still have my pilgrim feet unfailing found,
> As despot courts their blaze of gems display,
> Ev'n by the secret cottage far away
> The lily of domestic joy decay;
> While Freedom's farthest hamlets blessings share,
> Found still beneath her smile, and only there.
> The casement shade more luscious woodbine binds,
> And to the door a neater pathway winds,
> At early morn the careful housewife, led
> To cull her dinner from its garden bed,
> Of weedless herbs a healthier prospect sees,
> While hum with busier joy her happy bees;
> In brighter rows her table wealth aspires,
> And laugh with merrier blaze her evening fires;
> Her infant's cheeks with fresher roses glow,
> And wilder graces sport around their brow;
> By clearer taper lit a cleanlier board
> Receives at supper hour her tempting hoard;
> The chamber hearth with fresher boughs is spread,
> And whiter is the hospitable bed.

Turning to the valley of the Loire, with an affectionate outcry,

> And thou ! fair favoured region ! which my soul
> Shall love, till Life has broke her golden bowl,

he declares that nature is more beautiful in that land since Freedom has made its fields and skies her peculiar care. Though war is about to commence, yet may that land rejoice, for new virtues are springing even from war's flames:

> Nature, as in her prime, her virgin reign
> Begins, and Love and Truth compose her train;
> With pulseless hand, and fix'd unwearied gaze,
> Unbreathing Justice her still beam surveys.

Even Consumption shall cease to ravage a land that enjoys the blessings of Liberty. As this poem was published after the September massacres, after Wordsworth had seen with his own eyes the Jacobin party locked in a grip of implacable frenzy with the moderates of the Assembly, after the King had been executed, there can be no question of the firmness of his republicanism and of his nerves. The final apostrophe, beginning

> Oh give, great God, to Freedom's waves to ride
> Sublime o'er Conquest, Avarice, and Pride,

is feverish and almost incoherent, but a clear and unmistakable denunciation of the coalition of kings against France rings out in the lines:

> And grant that every sceptred child of clay,
> Who cries, presumptuous, "Here their tides shall stay,"
> Swept in their anger from th' affrighted shore,
> With all his creatures sink—to rise no more.

In taking leave of this singular poem, let us recall the cordial but discriminating words of Coleridge in the "Biographia Literaria":

"During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, I became acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's first publications, entitled Descriptive Sketches; and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced. In the form, style, and manner of the whole poem and in the structure of the particular lines and periods, there is an harshness and an acerbity connected and combined with words and images all aglow, which might recall those products of the vegetable world, where gorgeous blossoms rise out of the hard and thorny rind and shell, within which the rich fruit was elaborating. The language was not only peculiar and strong, but at times knotty and contorted, as by its own impatient strength; while the novelty and struggling crowd of images, acting in conjunction with the difficulties of the style, demanded always a greater closeness of attention than poetry (at all events, than descriptive poetry) has a right to claim. It not seldom, therefore, justified the complaint of obscurity."

Wordsworth's life in 1793 is shrouded with a degree of mystery that is itself mysterious. A poet in his twenty-fourth year is not likely to live without warm friends and curious acquaintances, is not likely to withdraw from social scenes or to be a niggardly correspondent. Yet not a single letter of the young republican, dating from this year, has ever been printed—except the draft of a public epistle, which we shall consider later. Four of his sister's letters to Jane Pollard—or, rather, fragments of them—written in this year have been published, and in his old age the poet made a few references to this time in notes to his poems. Evidently his relatives not only disapproved of him then, but continued long afterwards to do their utmost to cover with oblivion the season of his unripeness. Later, he too joined the conspiracy against the memory of his youthful self. It has been lightly assumed that he lived while in London with his brother Richard, but I know of nothing to prove this. His income could not have been more than enough for a most frugal existence.

On Sunday morning, June 16, 1793, his sister wrote to Miss Pollard: "I cannot foresee the day of my felicity, the day on which I am once more to find a home under the same roof as my brother. All is still obscure and dark." She pleads for sympathy with her "little schemes of felicity," her "scenes of happiness, happiness arising from the exercise of the social affections in retirement and rural quiet." She says she often hears from her dear brother William. "I am very anxious about him just now," she adds, "as he has not yet got an employment. He is looking out, and wishing for the opportunity of engaging himself as tutor to some young gentleman, an office for which he is peculiarly well qualified. Oh, Jane, the last time we were together he won my affection to a degree which I cannot describe, his attentions to me were such as the most sensible of mortals must have been touched with; there was no pleasure that he would not have given up with joy for half an hour's conversation with me. It was in winter at Christmas that he was last at Forncett." She de-

scribes her joys on that memorable occasion, which was at the close of 1790. By her brother's advice, probably, and for his sake, she is now studying French, "fagging it tolerably hard," she says. It is a melancholy fact that not until the next autumn or winter after his return from France did he see his adorable sister. Her passion fed on patience, which nourished it for a sustained and lofty flight. It is through her eyes chiefly that we see him at this time. Her anxiety is equalled only by her confidence. Does he hold with those atrocious French? No truer Englishman exists! Can it be true he is a heretic? Why, he is her brother William, and the charge needs no further refutation! Is he idle and unproductive? The finest and rarest qualities, she is certain, lie ready for employment in his rich nature if only he has a chance to teach. How eagerly she catches at his assent, in the last lines of "An Evening Walk," to her long-cherished hope that they might live together in a cottage of their own! She even includes Miss Pollard in her dream of felicity:

"Why are you not seated with me? and my dear William, why is he not here also? I could almost fancy that I see you both near me. I hear you point out a spot where, if we could erect a little cottage and call it our own, we could be the happiest of human beings. I see my brother fired with the idea of leading his sister to such a retreat as I fancy, ever ready at our call, hastening to assist us in painting. Our parlour is in a moment furnished; our garden is adorned by magic; the roses and honeysuckles spring at our command; the wood behind the house lifts its head, furnishing us with a winter's shelter and a summer's noonday shade. My dear friend, I trust that ere long you will be, without the aid of imagination, the companion of my walks, and my dear William may be of our party. He is now going upon a tour to the West of England, along with a gentleman who was formerly a schoolfellow, a man of fortune, who is to bear all the expense of the journey, and only requests the favour of William's company, as he is averse to the idea of going alone. As William has not the prospect of any immediate employment, I think he cannot pursue a better scheme. He is perfectly at

liberty to quit this companion as soon as anything more advantageous offers."

Then she bursts into an ecstatic strain, in full accord with her most loving nature, and justified, no doubt, by qualities in her brother known as yet to her alone:

"But it is enough to say that I am likely to have the happiness of introducing you to my beloved brother. You must forgive me for talking so much of him; my affection hurries me on, and makes me forget that you cannot be so much interested in the subject as I am. You do not know him; you do not know how amiable he is. Perhaps you reply, 'But I know how blinded you are.' Well, my dearest, I plead guilty at once; I *must* be blind; he cannot be so pleasing as my fondness makes him. I am willing to allow that half the virtues with which I fancy him endowed are the creation of my love; but surely I may be excused! He was never tired of comforting his sister; he never left her in anger; he always met her with joy; he preferred her society to every other pleasure—or rather, when we were so happy as to be within each other's reach, he had no pleasure when we were compelled to be divided. Do not, then, expect too much from this brother of whom I have delighted so to talk to you. In the first place, you must be with him more than once before he will be perfectly easy in conversation. In the second place, his person is not in his favour—at least, I should think not; but I soon ceased to discover this—nay, I almost thought that the opinion which I had formed was erroneous. He is, however, certainly rather plain, though otherwise has an extremely thoughtful countenance; but when he speaks it is often lighted up by a smile which I think very pleasing. But enough, he is my brother; why should I describe him? I shall be launching again into panegyric."

She returns with undaunted persistence to her plans for a meeting with him:

"My brother's tour will not be completed till October, at which time they [*i.e.*, William and William Calvert, the young man with whom he was to travel] will perhaps make a stand in North Wales, from whence he can very conveniently take a trip to Halifax. It is more than two years and a half since we last saw each other,

and so ardent is our desire for a meeting that we are determined upon procuring to ourselves this happiness, if it were even to be purchased at the price of a journey across the kingdom; but from North Wales into Yorkshire the distance is nothing. If, therefore, my brother does not meet with any employment, which is likely to fix him before I go to Halifax, we shall certainly meet there; but, if he should be engaged, we are determined to see each other at Forncett.

"If my brother makes an engagement which will take him out of England or confine him to one spot for any length of time, then he is determined to come and see me at Forncett, if it be but for a day, though he has never received an invitation from my uncle, and though he can have no possible inducement but the pleasure of seeing me. You must know that this favourite brother of mine happens to be no favourite with any of his near relations, except his brothers, by whom he is adored—I mean by John and Christopher, for Richard's disposition and his are totally different, and though they never have any quarrels, yet there is not that friendship between them which can only exist where two hearts are found to sympathize with each other in all their griefs and joys. I have not time or room to explain to you the foundation of the prejudices of my two uncles against my dear William; the subject is an unpleasant one for a letter; it will employ us more agreeably in conversation. Then, though I must confess that he has been somewhat to blame, yet I think I shall prove to you that the excuse might have been found in his natural disposition.

> In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
> Fond of each gentle, etc., etc.

That verse of Beattie's 'Minstrel' always reminds me of him, and indeed the whole character of Edwin resembles much what William was when I first knew him after my leaving Halifax.

> And oft he traced the uplands to survey,
> When o'er the sky advanced the kindling dawn,
> The crimson cloud, blue main and mountain gray,
> And lake dim gleaming on the dusky lawn,
> Far to the west the long long vale withdrawn.

I have been much disappointed that my uncle has not invited William to Forncett, but he is no favourite with him. Alas! Alas!"

Was ever the fraternal relation endowed with more romantic glamour? Was there ever a more ardent worship of a brother by a sister? It never failed, and the companionship of a lifetime was maintained at this high pitch, if not of expression, yet of intense feeling.

Her brother, in writing to her, broke through the formal style which often served as a necessary check to the violence of his emotions. Dorothy proudly transcribes two passages from his letters.

"The first," she explains, "is from the letter he wrote in answer to mine, informing him of my certainty of visiting Halifax. He says: 'Now, my dearest friend, how much do I wish that each emotion of pleasure or pain that visits your heart should excite a similar pleasure or a similar pain within me, by that sympathy which will almost identify us when we have stolen to our little cottage. I am determined to see you as soon as ever I have entered into an engagement. Immediately I will write to my uncle, and tell him that I cannot think of going anywhere before I have been with you. Whatever answer he gives me, I certainly will make a point of once more mingling my transports with yours. Alas! my dear sister, how soon must this happiness expire; yet there are moments worth ages.' . . . In another letter, in which he informs me of his intention to accept his friend Calvert's offer, he says, 'It will be easy for me to see you at Halifax. Oh, my dear, dear sister! with what transport shall I again meet you! with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight! So eager is my desire to see you, that all obstacles vanish. I see you in a moment running, or rather flying to my arms."

Wordsworth's biographers have had little to say about the breach which existed at this time between him and his uncles. The facts appear to be, however, that Dr. Cookson refused to let him visit Dorothy at Forncett, and that his supply of money was so greatly reduced as to make travelling impossible. Poor Dorothy's day of felicity was not to come quite as soon as she expected. She lost her purse, containing six guineas, which she had saved for her visit to Halifax. This was more than made up, however, by generous gifts from her brother Richard

and her uncle Crackanthorpe, of whom she now began to entertain a better opinion, saying that he had been influenced against her only by his wife, a proud and selfish woman. But her plan was upset by Calvert's horse, or, as we shall presently see, by an adventure of which she was kept in ignorance till its dangers were over. It seems that the young men began their journey late in the summer. They had spent some time in the Isle of Wight, and were probably at or near Salisbury, on their way to Wales, when the animal dragged them and their carriage into a ditch. The vehicle was ruined. Calvert rode off north on the steed, and the poet, after wandering for two days over Salisbury Plain, had no other resource but to hasten to the home of his old friend Robert Jones in North Wales. He went by way of Bath and Bristol to the banks of the "silvan Wye," whence he proceeded on foot. It was on this journey that he met, within the area of Goodrich Castle, the little girl whom he made the heroine of "We are Seven," although he did not write the poem at that time. Five years later he passed that way again, reposed under the same "dark sycamore," saw again the same hedgerows and the same farms, "green to the very door." If anyone still holds the view that Wordsworth, for two or three years after his return from France, suffered a dulling of sensibilities, an obscuration of spirits, was too sombre, too much absorbed in uncongenial politics to feel the thrill of nature, and that his poetic faculties were not reawakened until the soothing influence of his sister restored him to a more easy-going frame of mind, to optimism and peace —if anyone still holds this view, which was set forth in the "Memoirs," and has been very commonly held, what can he say of the passage in "Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," which describes, though disclaiming the attempt, what his feelings were in 1793?

> Like a roe
> I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
> Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
> Wherever nature led: more like a man

Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by),
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is passed,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.

Yet it must be admitted that these high spirits were a rebound from a state of dejection in which he had been plunged a few days before. It was on Salisbury Plain that he had in part conceived the melancholy tale which now bears the title "Guilt and Sorrow." And his sad thoughts there were due to reflecting on the probable mission of the British fleet which he had seen from the Isle of Wight. In the Advertisement prefixed to the above-mentioned poem in 1842 he wrote:

"During the latter part of the summer of 1793, having passed a month in the Isle of Wight, in view of the fleet which was then preparing for sea off Portsmouth at the commencement of the war, I left the place with melancholy forebodings. The American war was still fresh in memory. The struggle which was beginning, and which many thought would be brought to a speedy close by the irresistible arms of Great Britain being added to those of the allies, I was assured in my own mind would be of long continuance, and productive of distress and misery beyond all possible calculation. This conviction was pressed upon me from having been a witness, during a long residence in revolutionary France, of the spirit which prevailed in that country."

Far less cautious is his language in "The Prelude," which was written much earlier, and reproduces more faithfully his original emotion:

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag
In that unworthy service was prepared
To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,
A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep;
I saw them in their rest, a sojourner
Through a whole month of calm and glassy days
In that delightful island which protects
Their place of convocation—there I heard,
Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
A monitory sound that never failed,—
The sunset cannon. While the orb went down
In the tranquillity of nature, came
That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me
Without a spirit overcast by dark
Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
Sorrow for humankind, and pain of heart.*

The joy with which he took refuge in nature's bosom, when he found himself alone and far from every suggestion of discord, on the banks of the sweet inland river, contrasted strongly with the civic care which had oppressed him ever since his return from France. He had come home, "a patriot of the world." Rural England, erewhile, he tells us, his "tuneful haunt," seemed unsuited to his mood. He felt more in harmony with the general stir of the great city, where public questions were in the air. And though he took but a languid interest in the anti-slavery movement, which was then receiving one of those checks that only served to increase the zeal of its friends, this indifference was due to his conviction that if the French Revolution prospered, slavery, that "most rotten branch of human shame," would vanish with a host of other evils. As high as was his trust, so low was his despair, when his own country, which he had heard Frenchmen praise for her love of liberty, declared war upon the land of his hopes:

What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!

His moral nature, he says, had received no shock down to that very moment. All else had been progress; this was revolution. The order of his attachments was in-

* "Prelude," X. 314.

verted. Old loyalty to native land, instead of becoming merged in a more comprehensive allegiance to human welfare, was found to be a principle of evil. In what must have been the bitterest sort of triumph he rejoiced, "yea, exulted," he tells us, when Englishmen were overthrown by thousands, left without glory on the field, or driven to shameful flight. When in church prayers were offered up or praises for English victories, he sat silent, and

> Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

This is a state of mind to which the best of men have been driven, and will, with the advance of civilization, be more frequently driven, when placed in a similar plight. Accustomed to nourish their patriotism on hopes of peace, justice, and mercy, they feel only disappointment and dismay when their country takes what they regard as a backward step. The excitations to war, which awaken what the multitudes call patriotism, put their love of country to the severest strain. Nowhere shall we find a more vivid account of the moral distress which the minority have to endure when their country, against their principles, goes to arms, than the one Wordsworth wrote in the tenth book of "The Prelude":

> Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear
> By violence, at one decisive rent,
> From the best youth in England their dear pride,
> Their joy, in England.*

And this, too, he says, at a time

> In which apostasy from ancient faith
> Seemed but conversion to a higher creed.

As news came from France, bad enough in itself, and always rendered more fearful in the telling, his spirits drooped, and he was obliged to use all his philosophy to maintain the wider outlook. How much easier it would have been to accept the popular and national prejudice, to admit that his hopes in man had been vain, to let his heart beat with the fever of warlike passion! The early months of 1793 brought almost nothing but dis-

* "Prelude," X. 299.

heartening stories. After the expulsion of his friends, the Girondists, from the Convention, accounts of their arrest, one by one, reached him either through the newspapers or through private letters. He must have shared the view of all competent French observers, that the Jacobins derived their direful power from public fear of the coalition. Thus he must have held England in part responsible for their atrocities. Deep as was his horror for the fanatics in Paris, he hated bitterly the foreign enemies of France:

> It was a lamentable time for man,
> Whether a hope had e'er been his or not;
> A woeful time for them whose hopes survived
> The shock; most woeful for those few who still
> Were flattered, and had trust in human kind:
> They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
> Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved:
> The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,
> And throttled with an infant godhead's might
> The snakes about her cradle; that was well,
> And as it should be; yet no cure for them
> Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be
> Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.*

At this point we have to consider a startling suggestion. It is possible, and, indeed, from all evidence now accessible it is probable, that Wordsworth returned to Paris in the autumn of 1793. What courage, audacity, skill, and cunning such an act must have required! Motives for it are not far to seek. His conscience and his natural affections drove him to respond to the touching appeals of Annette, and he may have still entertained the fond hope of adding his efforts to those of the moderate Revolutionists and thus helping to save "the good old cause." The facts, if this attractive conjecture is true at all, would be somewhat as follows. Annette had been begging him to return and marry her, writing as if she fully expected him to do so and knew that he was making plans to come, though at the same time forgiving his delay because the danger of

* His satisfaction in the defeat of the Allies continued at least till 1805, when the tenth book of "The Prelude" was written, and he never afterwards saw fit to alter these words.

being arrested as a spy was very great.* The war between England and the French republic had begun in a hesitating manner, and communications between the two countries were not yet closed. Letters occasionally got through, and there are many instances of British subjects entering France and remaining there in 1793. On May 31 the Girondists or moderate deputies were expelled from the Convention by the Jacobins. Many of them, escaping from Paris to Western Normandy, became the centre of an insurrection against these extremists. The insurgent forces held part of the sea-coast and established secret connections with the British. By the end of August it was possible, however perilous, for an Englishman who spoke French well and was acquainted with some of the Girondist leaders to land near Caen and proceed through the loosely drawn lines of the two factional armies to Paris. We find Wordsworth hovering around Portsmouth late in the summer with a rich and generous young friend, William Calvert, and although he made an excursion into the valley of the Wye and his sister expected him to visit his old comrade Jones in North Wales, he may have returned to Portsmouth and crossed to France, having been provided with money by Calvert. Arriving in Paris, he would find the political situation much worse than it was nine months before. Of his Girondist friends, some had fled, others were in prison. Then, rather than in the preceding year, would he have had those night fears which he describes in lines 63-93 already quoted from Book X. of "The Prelude." Finding that he faced almost inevitable death by remaining in Paris, being unable to reach Blois, and having witnessed the horrid spectacle of an execution on October 7, when the head of Gorsas, one of the Girondist deputies, fell on the scaffold, Wordsworth made his way home, baffled in his bold adventure.

The main piece of positive evidence that this episode

* See "William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon," by Émile Legouis, 1922, especially pages 124-133, which contain letters from Annette to both William and Dorothy, written in March, 1793, and intercepted by the French police.

actually occurred is a statement by Thomas Carlyle in his "Reminiscences," that Wordsworth, in 1840, told him he had witnessed the execution of Gorsas. Negative evidence in favour of belief is the absence of any record to show that Wordsworth was in England or Wales in the autumn of that year.

His sufferings after this vain but gallant attempt were intense and protracted. His days were melancholy, his nights miserable. For months and years after that fatal summer and autumn he rarely slept without seeing horrible visions, of victims on the scaffold and of dungeons "where the dust was laid with tears." In his dreams he was entangled in long orations, striving to clear himself before unjust tribunals, and treacherously deserted. The stage of these horrid scenes was familiar to him. He had known some of the actors. His hallucinations were echoes of the dreadful nights he had spent in Paris, not, one feels, in the comparatively safe and hope-inspiring months of November and December, 1792, but during the Terror. The gentle forms of nature had won his worship in boyhood. Now pity and sorrow, the handmaids of his second love, the love of man, exacted a "different ritual"—tears and groans and ghastly dreams. For consolation there came to him, he reverently dared to think, something like the spirit that must have supported the ancient prophets when they denounced the doom of God upon a guilty city. It was the thought that nature was not to blame, that the ideals of democracy were not to blame:

> When a taunt
> Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
> Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap
> From popular government and equality,"
> I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
> Of wild belief engrafted on their names
> By false philosophy had caused the woe,
> But a terrific reservoir of guilt
> And ignorance filled up from age to age,
> That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
> But burst and spread in deluge through the land.*

* "Prelude," X. 469.

Thus unshaken in the citadel of his faith, though sorely harassed in the outworks of social relations and practical life, he came through that most trying year.

He was not by any means the only person in England who was perplexed by the conflict of loyalties. Many were afflicted, though none perhaps so acutely as he was, partly because of his fine sensibilities, and partly because he had left his heart behind in France. History has scarcely done justice to the depth and extent of the moral support which the Revolutionary movement received in Great Britain between the opening of the American War and the proclamation of the French Empire in 1804, and especially between 1789 and 1794. Lost causes are too soon forgotten, though sometimes the strongest threads in the web of life are those that lie unseen below the surface. There can hardly be any doubt now that at the opening of the war with France Englishmen of finest sympathies and clearest reason were for the most part opposed to the action of their Government. Some were theoretical republicans, others merely liberal, others opposed to war on any account. It is not surprising that popular prejudice in war-time nicknamed them all Jacobins.

Wordsworth's connection with the English "Jacobins," with the most extreme element opposed to the war and actively agitating in favour of making England a republic, was much closer than has been generally admitted. In the first place, he appears to have associated himself very soon after his return from France with other young men of radical opinions. We have a hint of this in "The Prelude," when, referring to the declaration of war, he says:

> Not in my single self alone I found,
> But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
> Change and subversion from that hour.

It is not without significance that "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches" should have been printed for Joseph Johnson. He was the publisher of Dr. Priestley, Horne Tooke, and Mary Wollstonecraft. His

shop was a favourite meeting-place of republicans and free-thinkers. Paine and Godwin frequented it, and so, for a time, did William Blake, though his religious persuasions were of a very different nature from theirs. Johnson published *The Analytical Review*, which had been founded in 1788. He was hospitable and generous, a man of broad literary culture and philanthropic views. Wordsworth almost certainly met Godwin and Horne Tooke at Johnson's table or in his shop.

Nothing outside of "The Prelude" throws more light on Wordsworth's character and the convictions of his early manhood than a paper he wrote in reply to an attack upon the principles of the French Revolution, by a celebrated Church dignitary, Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff. Early in 1793 this interesting and versatile man published a sermon he had preached a long while before, on "The Wisdom and Goodness of God in having made both Rich and Poor," drawing consolation—for the rich—from the text: "The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all." He had been moved to prescribe this anodyne to the sufferings of the people because he observed a spirit of unrest among them and of unwillingness to engage in a war, the burden of which would, as usual, fall most heavily upon the labouring class. Without exhibiting so much romantic sensibility at the execution of Louis XVI. as Burke displayed, he still was shocked at that event, and, writing a political appendix to his sermon, dated four days after the fatal 21st of January, had them printed together. The appendix is a defence of the British Constitution, with strictures on French affairs.

The chief points in the Bishop's exhortation are as follows: He declares that a republic is of all forms of government the one he most dislikes, because it is most oppressive to the bulk of the people, who live in it under the tyranny of their equals. He is shocked beyond coherent utterance by the execution of a king. He maintains that the greatest freedom that can be enjoyed by man in a state of civil society is afforded to every individual by the British Constitution. He argues, on

grounds of expedience, in favour of monarchy. He defends aristocratic institutions. He deprecates the use of the Press "when employed to infuse into the minds of the lowest orders of the community disparaging ideas concerning the constitution of their country." Failing utterly to perceive that the doctrine of equality means equality of opportunity and absence of privilege, and not merely equality before the law, he wanders off into platitudes about equal division of land, the poor laws, and the charity of the rich. The poor are not so very badly off, he thinks, and there are hospitals, relief funds, etc., which would not exist if all men were on a level.

Wordsworth, who appears to have been acquainted with Bishop Watson's previous character for liberal views, felt the unpleasant inconsistency between that character and the spirit of this pamphlet. Coming home from France full of the importance of the struggle there going on, and impressed with the high principles which animated not only the best, but some of the most extreme and dangerous Revolutionists, he resolved to lose no time before following the example of Beaupuy and "performing the oath of his apostleship." The English in general appeared to him sunk in apathy. If he could not sacrifice himself with his Girondist friends in France, he could at least join the little band of English martyrs. He wrote a long reply to Bishop Watson, which was not printed till 1876. I doubt if he even sent a copy of it to the Bishop, who makes no mention of it in his "Anecdotes." The manuscript is carefully written in Wordsworth's own hand, and the title he prefixed to it is, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff on the Extraordinary Avowal of his Political Opinions, contained in the Appendix to his late Sermon: by a Republican." There is no date. Considering that it was written by a young man of twenty-three, or even making no such allowance, this tract deserves to rank with the writings of Burke, Paine, and Mackintosh, as one of the most philosophical treatises occasioned in England by the Revolutionary movement. It goes as

far below the surface of human nature as Burke's "Reflections," and is only less eloquent than that great work. "The Age of Reason" is scarcely more pungent and audacious, and Mackintosh's "Vindiciæ Gallicæ" is far less vigorous. From the point of view of immediate public benefit, it is a pity it was not printed and widely circulated as a counterblast, not only to Bishop Watson, but to Burke. What the effect upon Wordsworth's career of such an overt step would have been may be easily conjectured. The slow ripening of the next ten years would have been rendered impossible. He would have been hurried by the pressure of outside opinion into positions from which he could hardly have retired by the aid of reason and feeling alone. The violence of his passionate nature would have been let loose. His reserve would have been broken, his pride offended, his independence lost.

The young author avows that his spirit will not meet with the Bishop's approval, "for it is a republican spirit." He confesses that he is little touched by the death of Louis XVI., of whose guilt he is fully persuaded. In stern and judicial terms, which contrast boldly with the misplaced pathos of Burke, he says: "At a period big with the fate of the human race I am sorry that you attach so much importance to the personal sufferings of the late royal martyr, and that an anxiety for the issue of the present convulsions should not have prevented you from joining in the idle cry of modish lamentation which has resounded from the Court to the cottage." He himself regrets that sombre event only because it took place without regular legal process, and because the poor King, by the nature of his unnatural position above other men, had been "precluded from attaining even a moderate knowledge of common life, and from feeling a particular share in the interests of mankind. . . . Any other sorrow for the death of Louis is irrational and weak." He even excuses, or explains, the other executions which had shocked Watson, by asserting that Liberty is unfortunately "obliged to borrow the very arms of Despotism to overthrow him, and, in order

to reign in peace, must establish herself by violence." "She deplores such stern necessity," he continues, in a sentence which might have been borrowed from Robespierre, "but the safety of the people, her supreme law, is her consolation."

He defends the appropriation of Church property by the French nation, charging the higher clergy with vice, jobbery, and hypocrisy. Then, beginning to argue on the main subject, the superiority of an equalitarian republic over a monarchy and a system of privilege, he indulges in much strong and sarcastic language. Curiously modern is his exposition of the principles of the referendum, but his distrust of long terms of office brings us back to the eighteenth century. He attacks the British penal code, pleads in favour of giving much executive power to the legislature, condemns the hereditary principle, and, in a sentence which might be taken as a summary of Shakespeare's English history-plays, declares: "The office of kings is a trial to which human virtue is not equal." A legislator, he says, being aware "that the extremes of poverty and riches have a necessary tendency to corrupt the human heart, will banish from his code all laws such as the unnatural monster of primogeniture," and such as encourage associations against labour, and, indeed, all monopolies and distinctions unfavourable to the poor. He makes the very keen observation that law-makers "have unjustly left unprotected that most important part of property, not less real because it has no material existence, that which ought to enable the labourer to provide food for himself and his family." He calls for "wise and salutary regulations counteracting that inequality among mankind which proceeds from the present *fixed* disproportion of their possessions." He objects to nobility on several grounds, one of which is that "it has a necessary tendency to dishonour labour." He advocates manhood franchise, declaring that "if there is a single man in Great Britain who has no suffrage in the election of a representative, the will of the society of which he is a member is not generally expressed; he is a Helot in

that society." He attacks Burke for endeavouring to rivet the present to a dead past. He rallies the Bishop on having deserted the cause of parliamentary reform, and charges him in terrible indignation with having "no wish to dispel an infatuation which is now giving up to the sword so large a portion of the poor, and consigning the rest to the more slow and painful consumption of want." The letter ends abruptly, in the middle of a sentence.

In trying to decide which of the two controversialists has the better of the argument, much will, of course, depend upon the reader's point of view. Watson's opinions are sober, not to say stale. They are those of a man who looks backward rather than forward. What has been and is, will probably continue. He is a pessimist when he regards human nature, an optimist when he estimates human institutions. Wordsworth, on the other hand, looks at things in precisely the opposite way. With him, as with all revolutionists, the salient and blessed fact in life is the possibility of indefinite progress. Light breaks upon him out of the future, and he turns his face cheerfully towards the light. In comparison with the infinite aptitudes of man, the pregnant powers of his divine nature, how fragmentary and imperfect are his laws, his social order, and all his works! There is nothing sacred about institutions except their value to living men; but man is sacred. It is absurd to trace this faith to Rousseau, as if it had never been held before he uttered it. No general advance in civilization has been made except in the strength it confers. It springs in every healthy young heart. And Wordsworth's noble pamphlet, in its buoyant eloquence, its fearless logic, its trust in the supremacy of goodness, is splendidly youthful. One would rather live in his ideal world than in the ideal world of his antagonist. And one would rather be the writer of his burning plea for a forlorn hope than the staid and disillusioned apologist of the British Constitution. Wordsworth never wrote anything more creditable to his heart, and, except Burke's "Reflections,"

the literature of the time furnishes no other treatise at once so lively, so acute, and so profound.

It is no wonder Wordsworth's family rejected him. To his uncles it was plain that he shared the views of infidels and traitors. Priestley, Price, and Paine, were the bugbears of "well-disposed" people, who then, as ever, made no mistake in associating orthodox standards of religion with safe and settled political principles. No historical work gives a strong enough description of the struggle then going on in England; but from the pages of reviews, such as *The Gentleman's Magazine*, it is possible to realize how wide apart the two sides were, and how extremely critical was the situation. The Revolutionists were able and active, though relatively not numerous, of course. Their opponents, with the example of France before their eyes, watched them at every turn.

CHAPTER VII

PHILANTHROPIC PLANS

FORTUNATELY for the young poet's artistic development, "Descriptive Sketches" and "An Evening Walk" were unfavourably criticized. Few persons except his sister and his still undiscovered friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge took the trouble to read them, and still fewer liked them. Their unnatural diction and contorted syntax, their affectations and absurdities, were too much even for the perverted taste of that age, while the honest attempts at originality which Coleridge perceived in them were regarded by others as ridiculous. Partly in consequence of adverse criticism, but much more because the change in his social philosophy demanded a corresponding change of artistic method, Wordsworth's style now underwent a complete and momentous transformation. The result is perceptible in "Guilt and Sorrow," a poem which dates chiefly from 1793 and 1794. Some of it—a part, that is, of the Female Vagrant's story—was composed at least two years earlier. The whole, which was completed before the close of 1794, although not published until 1842, seems not to have been much altered. "The Female Vagrant," corresponding to thirty of the seventy-four stanzas which the entire work contains, was published in "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798.

"Guilt and Sorrow" is in almost every respect a great advance over "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches." The poet turns from the description of nature, in which he had not excelled Thomson or equalled Cowper, and attempts the more difficult work of narration. The story is entirely of his own invention or discovery. It did not come to him recommended by tradition or romantic glamour. He increases the difficulty of telling it by employing the Spenserian

stanza, thus multiplying rhymes and imposing on himself the task of keeping up the interest and movement of the whole tale while preserving the metrical unity of every nine lines. Notwithstanding his use of this highly artificial measure, whose associations suggest loose sentence-structure and the extreme of poetic licence, he has avoided both. The language is plain, the liberties taken are few and innocent, as compared with his previously published poems. The most noticeable improvement is in the diction. There are almost no inappropriate words, almost none of the terms exclusively employed in verse. It is very important to observe that, before he had ever seen Coleridge, conjointly with whom he formulated his theory of poetic diction, and from whom he received welcome encouragement, Wordsworth was already employing the language of everyday life in narrative poetry. Nor is there anything to indicate that he had in mind the examples of Cowper and Crabbe.

As might have been expected from the general direction of his thoughts, the poem deals with humble life. So, indeed, did the earlier ones, whenever human figures appeared in them; but here it is not healthy mountaineers and happy milkmaids, enlivening the scene in harmony with beautiful nature. We have, instead, the victims of social wrong, outcasts from the world, sunk in fortune below the level of contented poverty. Moreover, Wordsworth's immediate preoccupation with the political questions of the day gives the poem its aim and force. It is, in its way, as truly a tract for the times as his Reply to Bishop Watson. The ravages of war among the poor, raising prices, unsettling employment, causing the horrors of forced conscription, with the breaking up of families and impelling of innocent people towards legalized murder, are portrayed in a startling light. There is no relief, no suggestion that the glory of England or the elevation of great captains furnishes compensation for these wars. The evil is probed unflinchingly. It is not fair to say, as some have said, that the young poet hugged his grief because

he had at this time an unwholesome fondness for melancholy. It rather seems that he wrote as he did for the noble reason that his mind was filled with sorrow for others, that he had no thought of self, that he was not blinded by false appearances of national splendour, and that he knew where to look for wider and vastly more important interests. Following the lead of his first biographer, students of his life have too generally spoken of the sombre mood out of which this poem grew as something to be regretted, or at least condoned. He never was more truly a poet in the sense of having a prophetic insight into the life of his times and marking out the course of progress, than when he perceived the need of equality and the absolutely unmitigated evil of war. It is to be noticed also that in this poem poor and uneducated persons are represented naturally. They are the objects neither of sentimental affectation nor of contemptuous caricature. They do not speak in dialect, but in plain English. Their emotions are not represented as the peculiar passions of a class, but as human feelings. Above all, they preserve their dignity. Not their poverty and lack of education was what he saw in them, but qualities of mind and heart which are all the more admirable because they withstand every disadvantage. This remained Wordsworth's permanent attitude, and is throughout one of the great distinctions of his poetry.

Some of the incidents of "Guilt and Sorrow," particularly the story of the soldier's widow, had been narrated to him years before by a woman who had suffered as she suffers. The rest had suggested itself to him as he rambled over Salisbury Plain after separating from Calvert. The sight of Stonehenge had made him think of the horrors of war in pagan times, and reflect how awful they are still, and how they fall more upon the poor than upon others. A summary of the poem would fail to reproduce its intense earnestness, its simplicity, and tragic power. In execution no less than in design, it is immeasurably above the rank of *juvenilia* in which it was once classified, and its value is strikingly

enhanced for him who reads it soon after reading the Reply to Bishop Watson. Two lines at least have become celebrated—those in which the unhappy woman, after losing her husband and children in America during the War of Independence, and returning to England in destitution, cries:

> And homeless near a thousand homes I stood,
> And near a thousand tables pined and wanted food.

The political situation in 1793 and 1794, because it was due to the conflict between two philosophies, which themselves grew out of two permanent aspects of human nature, continued to absorb Wordsworth's interest, preventing him from fixing himself in any profession. No similar crisis has affected England since, and to find a parallel we must go back to the middle of the seventeenth century. Without some conception of its magnitude, we shall utterly fail to understand the course of our poet's outer life, and still more the current of his deepest opinions and feelings. To perceive how intense was the passion, it is not enough to read the speeches of Pitt and Burke's "Reflections," with the replies made by their most eminent antagonists, by Fox and Sheridan, by Mackintosh and Erskine. It is not enough to study Godwin's "Political Justice" and Paine's "Rights of Man." It is necessary also to know how extensive was the small-fire amid the crash of this big artillery. The Press teemed with sermons and pamphlets for and against the French Revolution, the doctrine of innate rights, the theory of equality, the plea for a reform of the British Constitution. Several societies existed for propagating radical views, and at least one for combating them. The public ferment was widespread. A small but not inconsiderable number in England and Scotland persisted in demanding reforms in spite of the reflected odium cast upon all advocates of change by the unhappy condition of France. As is usually the case, this movement was confined almost entirely to the more enlightened class of artisans and to professional men—in other words, to persons who depended more

than others upon their own faculties. They were for the most part Dissenters, and of course Whigs. The Whig party in the House of Commons was very small, seldom mustering on a division more than sixty votes. Fox and Sheridan, Whitbread, Grey, and Wilberforce, were among its most prominent leaders.

Three elements were mingled in the public panic, as doubtless they were also mingled in the efforts of "seditious persons." These were political theory, economic theory, and religious belief. Sympathy with France was considered to imply disloyalty, a levelling tendency, and infidelity to the Christian religion. From Burke himself down to the lowest informer this view was held or professed by nearly all the friends of King, Property, and Church. "The property of France does not govern it," was said by Burke in condemnation of that country.

"The body of the people," he declared, "must not find the principles of natural subordination by art rooted out of their minds. They must respect that property of which they must not partake. They must labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to the endeavour, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice. Of this consolation whoever deprives them deadens their industry and strikes at the root of all acquisition, as of all consolation."

Whether this discouraging conclusion, to which his attachment to established order brought even so humane a man as Burke, be necessary or not, we can be sure that the young author of "Guilt and Sorrow" must have read it with vehement disapproval. Fortunately, he had gone too far to be caught by the inhuman and blasphemous use of theology in support of oppressive institutions implied in this reference to "eternal justice."

It seemed futile for the friends of any reform to struggle against a public alarmed by fears of plots, or against a majority in Parliament who were more or less eager for war. Fox's motion for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, imposing political and social disabili-

ties on Dissenters, was lost in 1790, and the number of his supporters fell from 105 on that occasion, to 63 when he brought in a similar measure two years later. Pitt and Burke, who had once been friends of electoral reform, now thought such subjects inopportune. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. Barracks were erected all over the country. Spies and informers were employed by Government. The army and navy were enormously increased. Prices went up. Poverty and unemployment were appalling. The only gleam of comfort was the abolition of the slave-trade, which was at length carried by Wilberforce, Fox, and their friends, against stolid opposition. Speakers and writers on the Tory side, and advocates in courts of law, openly professed that the British Constitution did not admit of representative government, and that men of wealth alone should have the suffrage.

To anticipate a little, the suspicion of Government and the panic of the great majority of the people in England and Scotland resulted at last in the arraignment, on the charge of high-treason, of Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke, a preacher and politician, Thomas Holcroft, a dramatist, John Thelwall, a professional agitator, and five other persons. Their cases were practically disposed of with the acquittal of Hardy on November 5, 1794, and of Horne Tooke shortly afterwards. The prisoners were defended by Thomas Erskine, whose speeches did much to counteract the alarmist tendencies fostered by those who favoured the war. The strength of the opposition was shown to be much greater than men supposed, by the widespread sympathy manifested for the prisoners, and by the vast crowds that welcomed them on their release. There can be no doubt now that a very considerable number of British subjects were on their side, ranging all the way from extreme revolutionists to moderate reformers, and it is evident that the opinions of this body cannot justly be all traced to Thomas Paine and Rousseau. They were much too diversified, and many of them too natural and inevitable, to be thus narrowed down. Some of them,

indeed, flow, and have always flowed, as an undercurrent, among the less happy and privileged elements of every community, or among its most enlightened members. History tends to overlook or misjudge movements which do not appear to have a successful issue, but minority reports often represent views the most just and the most brave. The trials of Hardy, Horne Tooke, Thelwall, and their fellows, were the culminating point of the anti-Jacobin panic. Holcroft, as we shall see, became soon afterwards, if indeed he was not at that time, an acquaintance of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and with Thelwall they were later on terms of considerable intimacy.

Meanwhile, it appears that lack of means prevented Wordsworth from returning to the intellectual excitement of London, and lack of an invitation kept him away from Forncett. In a letter to William Mathews, which is dated February 17 [1794] he gives his address as "Mr. Rawson's, Mill-house, near Halifax." "I am now staying," he says, "with a gentleman who married a relation of mine [his cousin, Miss Threlkeld], with whom my sister was brought up." And then follows the momentous statement which marks an epoch in his life and Dorothy's, the beginning of many happy years: "My sister is under the same roof with me, and, indeed, it was to see her that I came into this country." The hope long deferred had been realized at last. Their meeting at Halifax had been like the objective of a long campaign. How many plans, how many sacrifices, how many delays, had preceded this reunion! Three long years had passed since their last meeting, in the Christmas holidays of 1790-91. His only home was in her heart. Travel, independence, battling with the strong and dangerous currents of the world's life, had left him unsatisfied. Her faithful soul had been kept alive chiefly by hope that this day might come. Her quick apprehension, her genius for observing nature and the little events of life, her rare fidelity of expression, these qualities in which she was surpassed by no woman of her time, wanted purpose and outlet until then; and it

is plain that, although he might have deepened the line he had already chosen and become a great reflective poet, a master of earnest satire, he would never, without the daily companionship of his sister, have found that "joy in widest commonalty spread" which is the life-blood of his poetry. They were never again separated for more than a few weeks at a time until his death.

But though this great step towards a settlement had been taken, Wordsworth was still far from having found a means of livelihood. "I have done nothing," he writes, "and still continue to do nothing. What is to become of me I know not. I cannot bow down my mind to take orders; and as for the law, I have neither strength of mind, purse, or constitution to engage in that pursuit." He renounces the idea of taking his Master of Arts degree, as being too expensive. He inquires of Mathews, who is travelling in Mediterranean countries, whether "the principles of free government have any advocates in Portugal; or is Liberty a sound, of which they have never heard?" He says he has read no Spanish for three years, and little Italian, but of French he esteems himself a tolerable master. "My Italian studies," he says, "I am going to resume immediately, as it is my intention to instruct my sister in that language."

Richard Wordsworth, their father's elder brother, was collector of the port of Whitehaven, and thither, after a long visit together near Halifax, the happy pair travelled by coach. The distance is about one hundred miles. How long they remained there is not known, but it appears that William Calvert offered them rooms in a farmhouse, called Windy Brow, belonging to him, near Keswick. It stood on the southern side of Latrigg, a steep hill that rises from the River Greta, and commanded a comprehensive view of Derwentwater and the mountains that encircle both lake and town. They entered the district by way of Kendal.

"I walked," writes Dorothy triumphantly, "with my brother at my side, from Kendal to Grasmere eighteen miles, and afterwards from Grasmere to Kes-

wick, fifteen miles, through the most delightful country that was ever seen. We are now at a farm-house, about half a mile from Keswick. When I came, I intended to stay only a few days; but the country is so delightful, and, above all, I have so full an enjoyment of my brother's company, that I have determined to stay a few weeks longer. After I leave Windy Brow, I shall proceed to Whitehaven."

In an undated letter to Miss Pollard, she dilates on the beauty of the landscape and the good manners and good sense of the tenant-farming family that occupied Windy Brow. She still exults in her new-found freedom, and is determined it shall last as long as possible:

"You would hear from my aunt of my wonderful powers in the way of walking, and of my safe arrival at Grasmere. At Keswick I still remain. I have been so much delighted with the people of this house, with its situation, with the cheapness of living, and above all with the opportunity which I have of enjoying my brother's company, that, although on my arrival I only talked of staying a few days, I have already been here above a fortnight, and intend staying still a few weeks longer, perhaps three or four. . . . We have a neat parlour to ourselves which Mr. Calvert has fitted up for his own use, and the lodging-rooms are very comfortable. Till my brother gets some employment he will lodge here. Mr. Calvert is not now at Windy Brow, as you will suppose. We please ourselves in calculating from our present expenses for how very small a sum we could live. We find our own food. Our breakfast and supper are of milk, and our dinner chiefly of potatoes, and we drink no tea."

But her aunt, Mrs. Crackanthorpe, of Newbiggin, had views of her own, which were also the views of the world, or the elderly and respectable part of the world, as to the propriety of living gipsy-fashion. Long walks, indeed, and spending several weeks in a farmhouse belonging to the young and wealthy Mr. Calvert! She communicated these ideas, and apparently in rather pungent terms, to her niece, counting perhaps on the submissiveness which had perforce been shown hitherto

by that young lady. But the same spirit that prompted the Reply to Bishop Watson flames up in Dorothy's answer of April 21, 1794, and it is quite likely that her independence was charged against the French or Tom Paine and the Americans. She takes refuge proudly under the shadow of her brother's name:

"I affirm that I consider the character and virtues of my brother as sufficient protection; and besides I am convinced that there is no place in the world in which a good and virtuous young woman would be more likely to continue good and virtuous than under the roof of these honest, worthy, uncorrupted people: so that any guardianship beyond theirs I should think altogether unnecessary. I cannot pass unnoticed that part of your letter in which you speak of my 'rambling about the country on foot.' So far from considering this as a matter of condemnation, I rather thought it would have given my friends pleasure to hear that I had courage to make use of the strength with which nature has endowed me, when it not only procured me infinitely more pleasure than I should have received from sitting in a post chaise, but was also the means of saving me at least thirty shillings."

She mentions as her greatest inducement the society of her brother:

"I am now twenty-two years of age, and such have been the circumstances of my life that I may be said to have enjoyed his company only for a very few months. An opportunity now presents itself of obtaining this satisfaction, an opportunity which I could not see pass from me without unspeakable pain. I have regained all the knowledge I had of the French language some years ago, and have added considerably to it. I have now begun Italian, of which I expect to have soon gained a sufficient knowledge to receive much entertainment and advantage from it."

She accepts the invitation of her aunt and uncle to visit them on her return from Whitehaven.

The beautiful poem "Louisa" and the lines "To a Young Lady who had been Reproached for taking Long Walks in the Country" may well have been composed

at this time, and the latter in consequence of Mrs. Crackanthorpe's admonition. It is well known that Wordsworth in a number of poems addressed his sister under other names than her own. "Dear Child of Nature, let them rail!" is appropriate to her and to the occasion. Later, when she was definitely settled in life with him, there could have been no one who would feel authorized to "reproach" her. Wordsworth, in extreme old age, gave an inconsistent account of the dates of both poems, attributing them to 1803 and to 1805, and saying that they were "composed at the same time and on the same view." Yet the second of them was printed in *The Morning Post* newspaper on February 12, 1802. Moreover, the expression "Lapland night" is one which he used in a letter in 1791. The internal connection between the two poems was once closer than it now appears to be. When "Louisa" was first revised, in the edition of 1836, it began:

> Though by a sickly taste betrayed,
> Some will dispraise the lovely Maid,
> With fearless pride I say;

though this reading disappeared in the edition of 1845. One is almost persuaded that this was an allusion to Mrs. Crackanthorpe's sense of propriety. All other editions give a very different reading. Curiously enough, the peculiar form of stanza used in these two poems is the same as that of "Three years she grew in sun and shower"; and what was printed as the second stanza of "Louisa," in the editions from 1807 to 1843, looks as if it had originally belonged to this lovely nameless piece, which the poet printed as having been composed in the Harz Forest in 1799. It reads:

> And she hath smiles to earth unknown;
> Smiles that with motion of their own
> Do spread, and sink, and rise;
> That come and go with endless play,
> And ever, as they pass away,
> Are hidden in her eyes.

It is a metre the poet rarely used. One stanza of his translation of the Vicomte de Ségur's French Verses,

1795, the pieces mentioned, "Ruth," 1799, one stanza of "The Waterfall and the Eglantine," 1800, and six other poems scattered along between 1814 and 1831, are the only instances. All these facts incline me to think that the verses "Louisa" and "To a Young Lady" were composed long before 1802. Whether they affect the date and subject of "Three years she grew" is another matter.

Four long letters from Wordsworth in the North to William Mathews in London, written at long intervals between May 23, 1794, and January 10, 1795, present him in a new and rather surprising light. To no other correspondent, so far as we know, did he ever write with so little reserve. The subject this time is a plan of editing a magazine in the Metropolis, or, in case that cannot be done, of finding a place on some newspaper. He is afraid of venturing to London, on account of the expense. He thinks of remaining in the North and sending his contributions by post. Mathews and another young man are to attend to the business in town. Wordsworth himself, and Mathews, too, as he supposes, are too poor to advance any money towards carrying out the scheme, but perhaps this might be got over, he boyishly says, if they could be sure of the patronage of the public. He wishes Mathews distinctly to understand what his political sentiments are, as the plan cannot proceed unless the editors agree on this subject. In such a work as they have in mind, "it will be impossible not to inculcate principles of government and forms of social order of one kind or another." His confession of political faith is brief and unequivocal:

"I solemnly affirm that in no writings of mine will I ever admit of any sentiments which can have the least tendency to induce my readers to suppose that the doctrines which are now enforced by banishment, imprisonment, etc., etc., are other than pregnant with every species of misery. You know perhaps already that I am of that odious class of men called democrats, and of that class I shall for ever continue."

He proposes to contribute essays on Morals and Politics, besides critical remarks upon Poetry, Painting, Gardening, "and other subjects of amusement." He declares that all the periodicals with which he is acquainted, except one or two, "appear to be written to maintain the existence of prejudice and to disseminate error," and to such purposes he will not prostitute his pen. He has plenty of leisure, and is only correcting and adding to his published poems, which he had "huddled up" and sent imperfect into the world with great reluctance.

"But," he continues, "as I had done nothing by which to distinguish myself at the University, I thought these little things might show that I could do something. They have been treated with unmerited contempt by some of the periodical publications, and others have spoken in higher terms of them than they deserve. I have another poem, written last summer, ready for the press, though I certainly should not publish it unless I hoped to derive from it some pecuniary recompense."

And he begs Mathews to look in at Johnson's, the publisher's, "and ask him if he ever sells any of those poems."

Writing again from Whitehaven in June, he says he has read with great pleasure the explicit avowal of Mathew's "political sentiments," and in return will set forth his own in more detail.

"I disapprove," he declares, "of monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified. Hereditary distinctions, and privileged orders of every species, I think must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement: hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers of the British Constitution."

Two causes are at work, he says, subverting the Constitution: first, the bad conduct of men in power; and second, "the changes of opinion respecting matters of government which within these few years have rapidly taken place in the minds of speculative men." To hasten these changes, he says, "I would give every

additional energy in my power," though he adds: "I recoil from the bare idea of a Revolution." Then, as if to give Mathews a specimen of what the country editor of the proposed magazine was capable of, he rises heavily to a flight of eloquence in a manner already long out of fashion. There is a magisterial air in all Wordsworth's prose, except his shortest and most familiar letters. On more than one occasion the style attains real majesty. On many others, we must confess, it is affectedly pompous, owing very likely to the fact that he was imitating Milton and other seventeenth-century controversialists. His political programme is vague. He has hardly got beyond sentiment and declamation. He mentions no definite reform which he wishes to see established, except granting complete liberty of the Press.

"On this subject," he concludes, "I think I have said enough, if it be not necessary to add that, when I observe the people should be enlightened upon the subject of politics, I severely condemn all inflammatory addresses to the passions of men, even when it is intended to direct those passions to a good purpose. I know that the multitude walk in darkness. I would put into each man's hand a lantern to guide him, and not have him set out upon his journey depending for illumination on abortive flashes of lightning or the coruscations of transitory meteors."

From this dizzy height the young enthusiast descends to particulars. He proposes as the name of their periodical, *The Philanthropist, a Monthly Miscellany*, gravely remarking: "This title, I think, would be noticed. It includes everything that can instruct and amuse mankind." He goes on buoyantly to sketch the several departments of the magazine, insisting that the pages allotted to verse should be filled from new poetical publications of merit, and such old ones as are not generally known. As to subscribers, he expresses himself hopefully, but warns Mathews that "amongst the partisans of this war and of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, amongst the mighty class of selfish alarmists," they would find no friends. "We must then look

for protection entirely amongst the dispassionate advocates of liberty and discussion." The clergy, he is sure, will turn from them. But from young men at the universities, from Dissenters, and perhaps in Ireland, they will receive support. As to money, he has not a single sixpence to advance, and he must remain in the country. A friend, he says, has offered him a share of his income, which puts him under the obligation of trying to be of some little service to his fellow-men. It was well for him and for his fellow-men to all time that he did not plunge into the soul-consuming trade of journalism. It is interesting, however, that he thought seriously of doing so, and under all his odd verbiage one may easily perceive a brave and enterprising spirit. Boyish zest and manly foresight here meet and mingle strangely. He begs Mathews to answer him "as soon as possible, and at great length." His own letter covers nearly eight printed pages, and ends with the stately assurance: "I am, with great respect and esteem, your fellow-labourer and friend, W. WORDSWORTH."

After such a bold challenge, it is amusing to turn to Wordsworth's letter to Mathews, headed Keswick, November 7, 1794, and read: "The more nearly we approached the time fixed for action, the more strongly was I persuaded that we should decline the field. I was not, therefore, either much surprised or mortified at the contents of your letter." The scheme has been abandoned, and Mathews has taken a position on some London newspaper. Wordsworth wants to know what it is like, with the idea of seeking a similar post. "I begin to wish much to be in Town," he says, and adds very sensibly, "Cataracts and mountains are good occasional society, but they will not do for constant companions." In January, 1795, he takes up again the topic of journalism in London, admitting his total ignorance of what qualifications are required. He is sure he could not make a good parliamentary reporter, having neither strength of memory, quickness of penmanship, nor rapidity of composition, and being subject to violent headaches.

"One thing, however, I can boast," he says, "and on that one thing I rely, extreme frugality. . . . You say a newspaper would be glad of me; do you think you could insure me employment in that way on terms similar to your own? I mean also in an opposition paper, for really I cannot, in conscience and in principle, abet in the smallest degree the measures pursued by the present Ministry."

A little light from another quarter is thrown upon these journalistic projects by a passage in Charles Mathew's "Memoirs." He tells us that his brother added to the income allowed him by his father by contributing to *The Oracle* and *The World*, and for a time was parliamentary reporter to these and other newspapers. Boaden, the enthusiastic admirer and subsequently the biographer of the Kembles, edited *The Oracle*, and Charles Mathews himself was for a little while editor of *The Thespian*, a periodical entirely devoted to the drama.

It is a pity that so little is known about one who evidently was Wordsworth's most intimate friend at this interesting period of his life. Inference based upon only one side of their correspondence enables one to assert, with considerable confidence, that Mathews was a rebel against religious authority, and that community of feeling on this subject was one of the bonds between the young men. They had been contemporaries at Cambridge, they saw something of each other afterwards in London, they both refused to obey the wishes of their families and study for the ministry. A letter from Mathews to his brother, dated Barbados, June 5, 1801, confirms the conjecture that religious independence was a very serious concern with him. He writes:

". . . Tell Eliza [his brother's wife] from me that I sincerely wish her well in body and mind; but that to secure the latter from disease she must carefully watch that the seeds of superstition, which some one has plentifully sown in her heart, do not bring forth the fruit it generally does, illiberality of sentiment and that worst of all fiends, religious bigotry. The whole

history of mankind is but a relation of the fatal and mischievous effects of this diabolical tyrant who has uniformly preyed upon the enlightened few that have dared to lift up their heads against the oppressor of their afflicted brethren, and has gnawed the very vitals of social existence. There is no part of the globe that is not even now groaning beneath her baneful pressure; and whatever form she assumes, she still arrogates to herself the claim of infallibility, and her votaries, of whatever sect they may be, damn by wholesale all the rest of the world. A freedom from superstition is the first blessing we can enjoy. Religion in some shape seems necessary to political existence. The wise man laughs at the follies of the vulgar, and in the pure contemplation of a benevolent Author of all Beings finds that happiness which others in vain look for amid the load of trumpery and ceremonies with which they think the Creator is gratified. If He can be gratified by an exertion of feeble mortals, it must be when they imitate His perfection by mutual benevolence and kindness. That you may long enjoy these blessings is the sincere prayer of your brother and friend, W. MATHEWS."*

Whereupon Charles Mathews's second wife, who edited his "Memoirs," comments as follows:

"With the above remarks the writer's early experience had something to do; and his feelings naturally took alarm at a mistaken tendency, evident to all who knew the amiable person to whom he alludes. Mr. William Mathews had in his boyhood felt the gloom and rigours of fanaticism beneath his father's roof, where he had ceased to reside for some years, although he frequently visited it, and was on the most affectionate terms with all his family, who might be said to idolize him. But in these visits he resisted with all the energies of his strong mind every after-association with the ignorant and illiberal portion of his father's 'brethren.'"

Meanwhile—to be as vague as possible, for the exact time is not known—Wordsworth had found means of being directly serviceable to a fellow-being, and was faithfully performing his duty. His friend William Calvert and a younger brother, Raisley, were sons of the steward of the Duke of Norfolk, who owned a large

* "Memoirs of Charles Mathews."

estate at Greystoke, four miles from Penrith. They had considerable independent means. William, as we have seen, owned Windy Brow. It was evidently one of these brothers, probably the younger, who offered Wordsworth a share of his income. Raisley was dying of consumption, and Wordsworth remained with him to comfort and entertain him, probably all through the summer and autumn of 1794. On October 1 he wrote to William Calvert from Keswick, suggesting that by a little economy the latter might help Raisley to go to Lisbon for his health, and offering to accompany him.

"Reflecting," he says, "that his return is uncertain, your brother requests me to inform you that he has drawn out his will, which he means to get executed in London. The purport of his will is to leave you all his property, real and personal, chargeable with a legacy of £600 to me, in case that on inquiry into the state of our affairs in London he should think it advisable to do so. It is at my request that this information is communicated to you, and I have no doubt but that you will do both him and myself the justice to hear this mark of his approbation without your good opinion of either of us being at all diminished by it."

It would appear that inquiry into the affairs of the Wordsworth heirs showed that their lawsuit against the Earl of Lonsdale was going badly; for Raisley Calvert, who died at Penrith in January, 1795, left Wordsworth £900.

This legacy from a young man who judged highly of Wordsworth's powers must not only have released him from the fear of want, but have made him renew his dedication to that art which thus far had proved almost too stubborn for him. In a letter to Mathews, written just before this event, Wordsworth admits that, although he had had sufficient time on his hands to write a folio volume, he had been undergoing much uneasiness of mind. "My poor friend," he says, "is barely alive . . . but he may linger on for some days." Politics and the success of Mathews's newspaper appear to have been his only other interests. His sister had been obliged to leave

him and return to Halifax. But for the dying gift of Raisley Calvert, bestowed with so much insight, the cottage they dreamed of might have been still a dream for many years. Without some degree of independence, and without the constant society of Dorothy, the years of fruitfulness could not have come for Wordsworth. The £900 made an immense difference in his prospects, and we may well believe that his hope of writing poetry revived in him at once. The money meant even more to his sister than to him. Before the summer of 1795 was over, their plans were made. In September she was still at Millhouse, near Halifax. Where and how her brother spent his time after the death of Raisley Calvert, there is very little to show. I believe he returned to London and remained there trying in vain to write. In her letter of September 2, 1795, to Jane Pollard, who by this time had become Mrs. Marshall, Miss Wordsworth, referring to her brother, says: "Living in the unsettled way in which he has hitherto lived in London is altogether unfavourable to mental exertion."

CHAPTER VIII

THE GODWIN CIRCLE

FROM January to September, 1795, Wordsworth is as completely lost to sight as if he had been locked up in Newgate or had returned to France. There is a gap of sixteen months in the published letters of his sister, and of nearly eleven months in his own. This is very strange, for not only had he a large family connection of educated persons, and not only was he already the author of two volumes of verse, but his character was energetic, and his ambitions inclined him towards public life. Yet in passing over this period, almost all that his first biographer remarks is:

"He had a good deal of Stoical pride, mingled with not a little Pelagian self-confidence. Having an inadequate perception of the necessity of divine grace, he placed his hopes where they could not stand; and did not place them where, if placed, they could not fall. He sought for ideal perfectibility where he could not but meet with real frailty, and did not look for peace where alone it could be found."

It is not known where he was or how employed outwardly; but one may safely infer something of his mood and the direction of his thoughts during those veiled months, for when he reappears there is a new firmness in his tone, as of one who has made renunciations, and thereby taken a step towards finding himself. He is confirmed in his disapproval of the war, and his feelings now seem more solidly based on philosophical principles. Sufficient proof of this assertion will be found in "The Borderers," composed in 1795-96, the thirteenth book of "The Prelude," and his letters to Francis Wrangham and Mathews immediately after the long silence. Furthermore, in the "Lines left upon a

Seat in a Yew-tree" there is heard a note which is quite rare in Wordsworth's poetry, a note of personal resentment for the world's neglect, its failure to appreciate him and his ideals. Although he told Miss Fenwick that they were composed in part at school at Hawkshead, it is impossible to believe that their actual turn, their indwelling sentiment, and their best qualities, can be traced farther back than 1795. In no other of his early poems do we find a line so characteristic of Wordsworth in his maturity, so certainly indicative of great poetic genius, as the last of these three:

> Yet, if the wind breathe soft, the curling waves,
> That break against the shore, shall lull thy mind
> By one soft impulse saved from vacancy.

None of his poems written before 1795 contains a line equal in magical felicity to

> The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper.

To have uttered that particular combination of sounds was to have made a fresh advance in English versification, although, strange to say, Wordsworth changed it in the edition of 1815, thereby drawing a protest from Charles Lamb. The passage of this poem which, under cover of allusion to an imaginary person already dead, is probably autobiographical, and gives us a picture of Wordsworth in 1795, is as follows:

> He was one who owned
> No common soul. In youth by science nursed,
> And led by nature into a wild scene
> Of lofty hopes, he to the world went forth
> A favoured Being, knowing no desire
> Which genius did not hallow; 'gainst the taint
> Of dissolute tongues, and jealousy, and hate,
> And scorn,—against all enemies prepared,
> All but neglect. The world, for so it thought,
> Owed him no service; wherefore he at once
> With indignation turned himself away,
> And with the food of pride sustained his soul
> In solitude.

This is no less than an epitome of his life before his reunion with Dorothy and his meeting with Coleridge, the

brother of his soul. The strain is Byronic. Shelley, too, sounded a like complaint. Wordsworth was too strong, and also, it must be said, he became too happy, to linger in such a mood.

He rose above it by establishing his life, for a time, upon the principles of William Godwin. This is a fact which no biographer of the poet has ventured to deny, though many attempts have been made to minimize its importance. I am acquainted with no account of Wordsworth's life that does justice to the strength and attractiveness of the philosophy upon which he disciplined his powerful reasoning faculties, and to which he gave a brave and stubborn allegiance from his twenty-third to his twenty-ninth year. When one considers how, in the lives of nearly all poets, the third decade stands preeminent as a formative and productive period, it seems impossible to exaggerate the value of Godwin's ideas to Wordsworth. And Wordsworth is admitted to be a great philosophical poet. Yet all his biographers have termed Godwin's system "preposterous." Wordsworth, even when he renounced it, fully appreciated its compulsive appeal. And for at least three or four years it claimed both his intellectual assent and his active support. He went to great lengths. If Wordsworth had published his Reply to Bishop Watson, he would have been liable to prosecution on a charge of sedition. It is amazing that Godwin escaped being imprisoned or exiled for his "Enquiry concerning Political Justice." But books have their fates, and this remarkable treatise has fared ill, for it was from the beginning covered with obloquy, and probably no literary or philosophical work of equal value has been so little read in proportion to its merit. Such is the force of organized prejudice. Also, the price was three guineas. The "patriotic" party were not content with crushing the democratic movement; they did their best to smother even the memory of it. Not only did they promptly check overt acts of a revolutionary tendency; they entered into a century-long conspiracy to suppress a number of noble intellectual works. Contemptuous disapproval

was the means employed, and it succeeded. The share of Godwin's "Political Justice" in the thought of the nineteenth century has been inconsiderable, if we set aside its influence on Wordsworth and Shelley and the Utilitarian school of philosophy. This, however, is no inconsiderable exception.

Wordsworth, in the years we are considering, was a disciple of Godwin. This did not mean the acceptance of his master's political theory alone, but of his system as a whole. Godwin has this much at least in common with Locke, that his philosophy is integral. It is rigorously deduced from a few chief principles. Thus its ethics cannot be held separately from its metaphysics, nor can its politics be detached from its psychology. Although the largest and the soundest part of the "Political Justice" is devoted to ethical and political considerations, which can hardly be distinguished from each other, as it is his dearest purpose to show they should not be, Godwin insists on their dependence on his doctrine of knowledge and will. He is a determinist, and the only weak element of his book is the thinness of his argument for necessity. The many pleas in favour of free-will which suggest themselves even to philosophers, as well as to ordinary thinkers, he almost wholly fails to take into account. Equally dogmatic, though not so audacious, because more widely shared, is his belief that experience is the source of all knowledge. "Nothing can be more incontrovertible," he asserts, "than that we do not bring pre-established ideas into the world with us." Justice, he contends, is the whole duty of man. And it seems that his criterion of justice is the greatest good of the greatest number: "utility, as it regards percipient beings, is the only basis of moral and political truth." Reason is the only organ whereby men can discover what is just: "to a rational being there can," he says, "be but one rule of conduct, justice, and one mode of ascertaining that rule, the exercise of his understanding."

Intuition and every form of mystical illumination, together with all authority, whether of numbers, an-

tiquity, institutions, or "inspired words," are calmly set aside. Morality is a matter of knowledge: "the most essential part of virtue consists in the incessantly seeking to inform ourselves more accurately upon the subject of utility and right." He affirms these principles unhesitatingly, and as if they must, of course, be admitted by every thinking person to whom they are stated separately, each in its own strength. But he himself supplies in his practical illustrations difficulties which might not have occurred to a less acute mind, and which a less honest mind would not have raised. It was upon these examples that his opponents seized. For instance, since man is a moral being and all his actions are either just or unjust, he has no rights—*i.e.*, no moral options—but only duties. And therefore there is no place for deeds of gratitude, for pardon, for partiality to friends or kindred, for vindictive punishment. Moreover, a promise has no sanctity, and an oath is an abomination; because "an individual surrenders the best attribute of man the moment he resolves to adhere to certain fixed principles for reasons not now present to his mind, but which formerly were." Marriage, accordingly, falls under his disapproval, in so far as it is a relation maintained solely in virtue of a promise. Creeds and similar fixed affirmations of belief lose their binding power, for, he says, "If I cease from the habit of being able to recall this evidence [that upon which the validity of a tenet depends], my belief is no longer a perception, but a prejudice." Some of these principles are to be found distinctly echoed in Wordsworth's "Borderers." Both that tragedy and the slightly earlier poem "Guilt and Sorrow" indicate that he was also imbued with Godwin's doctrine that "under the system of necessity the ideas of guilt, crime, desert, and accountableness, have no place." Godwin declares that, since the will is not free, "the assassin cannot help the murder he commits any more than the dagger." Punishment, therefore, should be limited to restraining the criminal from repeating his act of injustice.

It is evident that a society holding such views must

reject all but the barest essentials of government. Accordingly, Godwin insists that "government is an evil, an usurpation upon the private judgment and individual conscience of mankind." This would seem to be downright anarchism, and it must be said of Godwin, as Edward Caird said of Rousseau:*

"His method is always determined by the individualistic prejudices of his time. In morals, in politics, and in religion alike, he goes back from the complex to the simple; and for him the simple is always the purely individual, the subject apart from the object, the man apart from society. He does not see that in this way he is gradually emptying consciousness of all its contents, and that of the abstract individual at which he must finally arrive nothing can be said."

But there can be no doubt that much of the constructive thought which found expression in early British Liberalism and in the Constitution of the United States followed this line. To many practical statesmen, as well as to Rousseau and Godwin, it seemed that the sole function of government was to secure liberty of action to the individual. Wordsworth was prepared for Godwin's uncompromising enunciation of this principle by his previous acceptance of Rousseau's doctrine that every individual is by nature independent. Godwin never shrank from rigorous deduction, and uttered his thought as clearly as he conceived it. Stated less dogmatically, the same idea, of course, is latent in the writings of the American Federalists and in Bentham and J. S. Mill. All these political theorists, having an eye to practice, checked themselves halfway. But many Continental writers, of whom Tolstoi is the best known, have gone as far as Godwin. Nor was Godwin himself afraid to be called an anarchist. "Where anarchy," he says, "has slain its hundreds, despotism has sacrificed millions upon millions." And it cannot be said that he had not present in his mind the full meaning of the term when he thus wrote, for "Political

* "Essays on Literature."

Justice" was published in 1793, the preface being dated January 7 of that year. It is doubtful whether Wordsworth or many other of Godwin's disciples possessed enough confidence in abstract reasoning to follow him to this extreme conclusion. They gave an eager assent, however, to the less incisive and more practical statement that government, as actually existing, "reverses the genuine propensities of mind, and, instead of suffering us to look forward, teaches us to look backward for perfection; it prompts us to seek the public welfare, not in innovation and improvement, but in a timid reverence." The pure word of the Revolution, a creed to which the young Wordsworth clung with passionate fervour, is condensed in a few articles. They lie more or less scattered in Godwin's "Enquiry." The first concerns prophecy: "To conceive an order of society totally different from that which is now before our eyes, and to judge of the advantages that would accrue from its institution, are the prerogatives only of a few favoured minds." The second concerns prerogative: "They are the higher orders of society that find, or imagine they find, their advantage in injustice, and are eager to invent arguments for its defence." The third concerns the wisdom of common people: "The vulgar have no such interest, and submit to the reign of injustice from habit only and the want of reflection. . . . A very short period is enough for them to imbibe the sentiments of patriotism and liberty." The fourth concerns property: "My neighbour has just as much right to put an end to my existence with dagger or poison as to deny me that pecuniary assistance without which I must starve, or as to deny me that assistance without which my intellectual attainments or my moral exertions will be materially injured." The fifth concerns priests: "Their prosperity depends upon the reception of particular opinions in the world; they must therefore be enemies to freedom of inquiry; they must have a bias upon their minds impressed by something different from the force of evidence." Every one of these articles is affirmed by Wordsworth, either graphically in his early

poems, or dogmatically in his Reply to Bishop Watson, or by implication in his letters to Mathews.

To say that Godwin was lacking in historical feeling is putting the case too negatively. It is more correct to say that he chose not to be hampered by history. He regarded the present with keen perceptive powers, and looked to the future. The absence of a background in his picture of human destiny is not due to shallowness of literary culture, but to a deliberate theory. He was one of the last, and certainly the clearest, of the philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. And his method, as regards the use of history, is precisely the method of that whole great movement.

A peculiarity of his own, however, is that he relies altogether upon his individual judgment, and not at all upon the collective judgment of his fellow-men, which he mistrusts because it has been institutionally organized, and thus clogged with the weight of selfish advantages. And even in his own case he trusts, or professes to trust, only his perceptive and logical powers, and not at all his affections. He has, however, by no means succeeded in shutting out every emotional influence. To take him at his word in this respect is to do him an injustice. His principles are not cold-drawn. There is no fire more intense than the flame of pure intelligence. It is not conceivable that, without the tremor of inward burning, a man possessed as Godwin was, with a sense of responsibility, could write: "The doctrine of the injustice of accumulated property has been the foundation of all religious morality." The philosophy of the Enlightenment may well have been too difficult, too sheer, for minds accustomed to beaten tracks in the broad vales of thought, but it was not wanting in emotional splendour.

There was an appeal to high-souled youth in his apparently quiet statement: "It is in the nature of things impossible that the man who has determined with himself never to utter the truths he knows should be an intrepid and indefatigable thinker. The link that binds together the inward and the outer man is indissoluble;

and he that is not bold in speech will never be ardent and unprejudiced in enquiry." The voice of Burke, pleading for reverence towards the past, utters no call more eloquent and none so inspiring as this. German idealism, to be introduced into England presently by Coleridge, will teach perhaps a more aspiring ambition, but none so sane. Romanticism, more alluring to the artist, will lack something of this moral dignity. Not till Emerson comes, and after him the new leaders of scientific research, will that clear tone be heard again.

Godwinism soon fell into deep and undeserved disrepute. This was not due wholly to its peculiar features, some of which were beyond the comprehension of pragmatical minds, and others objectionable on the very grounds of practical utility to which Godwin sought to refer his thinking. It was due chiefly to the inherent unattractiveness of the whole philosophy of the Enlightenment, and to the inauspicious character of the times. Pure rationalism can perhaps never be expected to win the favour of more than a small minority, even among reflective men. Its voice is in no age altogether silent, but the echoes nearly always come back mingled with alien notes, the note of Classicism, the note of Transcendentalism, the note of Romanticism.

That Godwin's system did, through Bentham and Mill, for a while at all events, and in a limited degree, *faire école*, is indeed remarkable. The age, moreover, was not propitious. The passion of patriotism, lately starved by the disapproval with which thoughtful Englishmen viewed the conduct of their government before and during the American War and throughout the period of State trials between its disastrous conclusion and the opening of the new French War in 1793, the impatient desire to justify England's past and her present course, made men very intolerant of Godwin's imperturbable criticism. This was no time, they thought, for reform. Wordsworth, one of the first, as he was the greatest of its converts, adhered to the Godwinian system for six years. He met the passion of the hour with his own deep inward passion. He conquered love

of country with love of mankind. He rebuked with a reasoned hatred of war the elemental instincts of a people in arms. For six years his tenacious and inwardly energetic nature held fast its own religion. Well for him was it that prudence bade him keep to himself his perilous thoughts. Men were fined, imprisoned, and deported, for remarks no more seditious and far less explicit than his Reply to Bishop Watson. He was unable or unwilling, before Coleridge furnished him with a more supple dialectic than his own, to take advantage of the obvious defects of Godwinism, its inattention to human history, its blindness to the natural world, its indifference to the many irrational cravings of mankind. It is significant that both Goethe and Wordsworth, the greatest poets who crossed the threshold of the nineteenth century, were for a time votaries in the temple of rationalism, a temple nobly bare and generously open whether for entrance or egress, and that neither of them could compel himself to remain.

It is well known that in the character of the Solitary, in "The Excursion," Wordsworth has combined traits of several persons who had aroused his interest. The character was designed to represent a Godwinian, as the poet conceived of such a person in 1814. In the note dictated to Miss Fenwick in 1843, he speaks of the Solitary as follows:

"A character suitable to my purpose, the elements of which I drew from several persons with whom I had been connected, and who fell under my observation, during frequent residences in London at the beginning of the French Revolution. The chief of these was, one may *now* say, a Mr. Fawcett, a preacher at a dissenting meeting-house at the Old Jewry. It happened to me several times to be one of his congregation through my connection with Mr. Nicholson of Cateaton Street, who at that time, when I had not many acquaintances in London, used often to invite me to dine with him on Sundays; and I took that opportunity (Mr. N. being a dissenter) of going to hear Fawcett, who was an able and eloquent man. He published a poem on war, which had a good deal of merit, and made me think more about

him than I should otherwise have done. But his Christianity was never very deeply rooted; and, like many others in those times of like showy talents, he had not strength of character to withstand the effects of the French Revolution, and of the wild and lax opinions which had done so much towards producing it, and far more in carrying it forward in its extremes. Poor Fawcett, I have been told, became pretty much such a person as I have described; and early disappeared from the stage, having fallen into habits of intemperance, which I have heard (though I will not answer for the fact) hastened his death."

Poor Fawcett indeed, if this were all. But the aged poet's reminiscences should never be accepted without scrutiny, except in regard to his own emotional life, and happily we are able to piece together, from other sources, a much more favourable account of this person. A patient search has failed to discover anything derogatory to his character, and the gossip about him which Wordsworth heard is only an instance of the way in which men's reputations were assailed by those who took for granted that heterodox opinions must of necessity spring from a wicked heart and end in an evil life. The Rev. Joseph Fawcett was between thirty-five and forty years old in 1795, and had been preaching on Sunday evenings in a Dissenting church in the Old Jewry since about 1783. He preached to large intelligent audiences, upon whom he left an impression of originality and power. Among his hearers were Mrs. Siddons, the Kembles, Holcroft, the actor and dramatist, and perhaps also the comedian Charles Mathews, a brother of Wordsworth's most intimate friend. He left the ministry in 1795, and published in that year two volumes of sermons and a poem on "The Art of War," printed for J. Johnson. Of this generous and humane effusion a critic in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1795, judged far less favourably than Wordsworth, but deigned nevertheless to remark: "Mr. F. deserves commendation for awakening the milder feelings, and his expression will be pardoned for his sentiments." Two years later Fawcett published another long poem,

"The Art of Poetry," and in 1798 appeared his collected "Poems," including both "The Art of War," now entitled "Civilized War," and "The Art of Poetry," this volume also being printed for Johnson. In the preface the author says of himself:

"However humble a place in the scale of poetical excellence his readers shall ultimately allot him, it will ever be a source of proud satisfaction to him to remember that the first poetical effort he submitted to the public eye was neither a simple attempt to amuse the fancy nor to soothe the heart, but an indignant endeavour to tear away the splendid disguise which it has been the business of poets in all nations and ages to throw over the most odious and deformed of all the practices by which the annals of what is called civilized society have been disgraced."

The poem is a noble piece of work and shows an enlightened spirit. In "A War Elegy," which follows, Fawcett, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, illustrates the evils of war with a concrete instance. In his poem "On Visiting the Gardens of Ermenonville," he pays a hearty tribute to Rousseau. In the Advertisement to his "Ode on the Commemoration of the French Revolution, in the Champ de Mars, July 14, 1792," he declares that he witnessed the ceremonies described.

His character as a Godwinian is plainly stamped upon his "Sermons delivered at the Sunday Evening Lectures for the Winter Season, at the Old Jewry," as may be seen from some of the titles, as, for example, "Right and Wrong Judgment the Origin of Virtue and Vice." Another, entitled "Christianity vindicated in not particularly inculcating Friendship and Patriotism," is a truly great and brave sermon, in which he says.

"Friendship and Patriotism, so far as they stand distinguished from general humanity and philanthropy, so far as we consider only what is *peculiar* to them, although the more passionate operations of them may have captivated the popular imagination, yet if examined with a cool and sober eye will appear not to possess, strictly speaking, any moral beauty, and therefore not to have merited a place among the precepts of him who came to

inculcate simply pure religion and morality upon mankind. . . . Social virtue consists not in the love of this or the other individual or body of individuals, but in the love of man."

Another sermon, "On the Respect that is Due to all Men," is thoroughly equalitarian.

Among Fawcett's poems there is one, consisting of seven stanzas, entitled "Louisa: a Song." Wordsworth had it in memory, and was probably alluding to it consciously, when he wrote his own verses beginning "I met Louisa in the shade." Fawcett's first stanza is—

> As with Louisa late I sat,
> In yonder secret grove,
> How fondly did each bosom beat,
> And pour its tale of love!

Fawcett's "War Elegies" were published in 1801, three years before his death. The writer of his obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* dismissed him from life somewhat contemptuously as "an eccentric character," and referred slightingly to his works as being full of the "spirit of invention and bombast." But from Fawcett's inventive spirit so original a thinker as William Godwin had received some of his most striking ideas. He had known Fawcett for nearly twenty years before the date of "Political Justice," and declared him to be one of the four principal oral instructors to whom he felt his mind indebted for improvement, the others being Thomas Holcroft, George Dyson, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "Mr. Fawcett's modes of thinking," he wrote, "made a great impression upon me, as he was almost the first man I had ever been acquainted with who carried with him the semblance of original genius."* One of Fawcett's favourite topics, Godwin declared, "was a declamation against the domestic affections, a principle which admirably coincided with the dogmas of Jonathan Edwards, whose works I had read a short time before." What Godwin means when he refers in this cool way to the domestic affections will not appear monstrous to

* C. Kegan Paul, "William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries," 1896.

anyone who has read "Political Justice." When he asks the old question, "Who is my mother, or my brethren?" and gives the old and startling answer, he makes the sound inference, which weak mortality is very slow to accept, that domestic ties can never excuse unjust discrimination. No one who has read Godwin's heart-broken letters after the death of his wife can have any doubt that his own domestic affections, in spite of his austere habits of seclusion, were pure and strong.

The influence of Godwin on Wordsworth and Coleridge has never been satisfactorily explained or sufficiently emphasized. In his account of his life in 1794, he says: "It was in the close of this year that I first met with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, my acquaintance with whom was ripened in the year 1800 into a high degree of affectionate intimacy." It appears that he knew Wordsworth in 1798. He wrote of them in that year: "They are both extraordinary men, and both reputed men of genius." But there is every probability that Wordsworth and he had met in 1795 or earlier. The Mr. Nicholson with whom the young poet was in the habit of dining on Sundays when in London moved in Godwin's circle. He is often mentioned in Godwin's diary. He belonged to a small club, of which Thomas Holcroft and the actor Shield were members, called the Cannonian, after its president and founder, Cannon, an elderly Irishman, of bohemian habits, who was supposed to be engaged on an edition of Tibullus. At one time, long before Wordsworth's first visit to London, Nicholson lived in apartments which he rented from Holcroft, and the two wrote a novel together, which appeared in 1780 as "Alwyn, or the Gentleman Comedian." Mrs. Siddons's sister, the actress Elizabeth Kemble, afterwards Mrs. Whitelocke, rented lodgings from Holcroft in the same house. Holcroft's acquaintance with Godwin began in 1786, and it was he who reviewed "Political Justice" in *The Monthly Review*, in 1793. Before that work appeared, Godwin discussed its principles, "at occasional meetings," with Nicholson, Holcroft, Joel Barlow the American poet, Mackintosh,

the author of "Vindiciæ Gallicæ," and David Williams, the anonymous author of "Lessons to a Young Prince," an extremely revolutionary book. In Godwin's diary the name of Nicholson occurs several times in brief remarks, such as "Sup at Nicholson's, talk of ideal unity." Similar remarks occur in Holcroft's "Memoirs," showing that he, too, was intimate with Nicholson. Godwin dined frequently at the hospitable board of Johnson, the publisher of "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches." Among the persons he met there were Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft, who was employed by Johnson as a reader and translator. On December 11, 1794, Robert Lovell, the friend of Coleridge and Southey, wrote to Holcroft about their scheme of emigrating to America, and asked to be remembered to Nicholson and Godwin. This was only ten days after Holcroft's discharge from Newgate Prison, having been declared not guilty of the charge of treason for which he had lain committed since October. Nicholson was a teacher of mathematics and natural science, and a writer of books on chemistry. The name of Cateaton Street, where Wordsworth visited him, has disappeared from the map of London. It ran westward from the northern extremity of Old Jewry, and is now called Gresham Street. From Nicholson's house to Fawcett's chapel was only a step. To these curious affiliations may be added the fact that Nicholson was foreign agent for Thomas Wedgwood, the friend and patron of Coleridge, and that Basil Montagu, of whom we shall hear presently in connection with the Wordsworths, was a member of this circle of political and religious radicals.

The most extensive notice of Fawcett by a contemporary is that of William Hazlitt in 1810, which is as follows, and makes a very different impression from that made by Wordsworth's remarks to Miss Fenwick:

"It was he who delivered the Sunday evening lectures at the Old Jewry, which were so popular about twenty years ago. He afterwards retired to Hedgegrove in Hertfordshire. It was here that I first became

acquainted with him, and passed some of the pleasantest days of my life. He was the friend of my early youth. He was the first person of literary eminence whom I had then known; and the conversations I had with him on subjects of taste and philosophy (for his taste was as refined as his powers of reasoning were profound and subtle) gave me a delight, such as I can never feel again. The writings of Sterne, Fielding, Cervantes, Richardson, Rousseau, Godwin, Goethe, etc., were the usual subjects of our discourse, and the pleasure I had had in reading these authors seemed more than doubled. Of all the persons I have ever known, he was the most perfectly free from every taint of jealousy or narrowness. Never did a mean or sinister motive come near his heart. He was one of the most enthusiastic admirers of the French Revolution; and I believe that the disappointment of the hopes he had cherished of the freedom and happiness of mankind preyed upon his mind and hastened his death."*

It seems, then, from these bits of evidence, that during his various sojourns in London between January, 1793, and September, 1795, amounting in all to many months, Wordsworth lived in at least occasional connection with a circle that included Godwin, Nicholson, Fawcett, Holcroft, Shield, the Kembles, William Mathews, and perhaps his brother Charles, Johnson the bookseller, Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Robert Lovell, Basil Montagu, and indirectly Coleridge, Southey, and the Wedgwoods. This is not to say that he was acquainted at any one time with all these persons. In those years, however, the entire number were more or less in communication with one another. The influence of Godwin was dominant among them. Some of them were under the ban of public censure for holding democratic principles. They sympathized with the French Revolution; they opposed the war. The centre of political disaffection was to be found somewhere within this circle. More and more, as the Revolution went to extremes, and the military success of France exasperated and consolidated English patriotism, the possession of extreme democratic ideals was narrowed down to members of this group, so far as

* William Hazlitt's "Life of Holcroft," p. 171, London, 1902.

the intellectual society of England was concerned. The independence of character and the confidence in rational deduction which made them radical in politics had the same effect in religion. Several of them were professed Unitarians, and active in the propagation of their faith. They were feared and denounced as free-thinkers no less than as levellers. A very well-defined line was drawn around them. Wordsworth could not have associated with them without being considered by his family to have definitely taken their side in all respects. He never maintained a lively intercourse with many acquaintances at once. If he was at all intimate with the revolutionary group in London, they probably absorbed nearly all his social activity for the time. And it is plain that whatever use he may have made in "The Excursion" of reminiscences of Fawcett, it was sympathy, not vagrant curiosity, that drew him to the meeting-house in Old Jewry, and a deep intellectual interest that made him a student of Godwin. Not "The Excursion," nor even "The Prelude," but "Guilt and Sorrow," "The Convict," and "The Borderers," provide the direct reflection of his mood in 1795.

It is possible also that Wordsworth first heard through Holcroft or Godwin, early in 1795, of the arrangements being made between Coleridge, Southey, Lovell, and one or two other young men, to migrate to America and establish a philosophical community.* As we have seen,

* Some of the stages of this enterprise are to be seen in Southey's correspondence, beginning with the Easter Sunday, 1793, when he tramped away from Oxford with Milton's "Defence" in his knapsack, wishing he had the pen of Rousseau. In a letter to W. H. Bedford, written at Bristol, November 13, 1793, he mentions, as a mere speculation, going to America. On December 14, and again later in the month, he refers to the project, in letters to G. Bedford. Coleridge came over to Oxford in June, 1794, and met Southey, who wrote to Grosvenor Bedford an enthusiastic account of his new acquaintance, June 12. Cuthbert Southey, in Vol. I., p. 211, of Southey's "Letters," gives the names of the proposed company as including Southey, Robert Lovell, George Burnett of Balliol, Robert Allen of Corpus Christi, Oxford, Edmund Seward of Balliol, and S. T. Coleridge. Later adherents were Favell, Scott, and Le Grice. Seward died in 1795. The best and most tangible result of the scheme is intimated in Southey's enthusiastic remark to G. Bedford, in a letter from Bristol, February 8, 1795: "Coleridge is writing at the same table; our names are written in the book of destiny on the same page."

Lovell had written about this plan to Holcroft in the preceding December. The idea was not without example. Dr. Priestley's withdrawal from mob violence and calumny in England to the peaceful shores of the Susquehanna was much discussed in the public prints. *The Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1795, contained the following notice, which would naturally arouse a romantic interest:

"There is a colony established not far from the Susquehanna River, in America, by a class of wealthy Frenchmen, who formerly distinguished themselves in the Constituent Assembly of France, but were prudent enough to retire in time with their families and property; among them are Noailles, Talon, Blacon, Talleyrand, and other of the ci-devant noblesse: they have relinquished their titles, and have domesticated here in the most social manner. Their little settlement is called French Town. The tavern is kept by an officer who was formerly le baron Beaulieu!"

The settlement here referred to was made at Asylum, in what is now Bradford County, Pennsylvania. It was visited in May, 1795, by La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, who described it minutely in the first volume of his "Voyage en Amérique." He made his way thither, along the Susquehanna, after visiting the home of Dr. Priestley, at Northumberland. Asylum had been established about fifteen months before, on land purchased through the agency of the great proprietors, Morris and Nicholson. Talon and Noailles had come to Pennsylvania by way of England. Among the settlers were M. de Blacons, formerly a deputy to the Constituent from Dauphiné, and M. Colin, formerly M. l'Abbé de Sévigny, Priest-Archdeacon of Toul, who were partners, and kept a store in the wilderness; M. de Montulé, formerly a cavalry captain; M. de Bec de Lièvre, formerly a canon, now a storekeeper; the Messieurs de la Roue, old army officers; M. de Noailles, of San Domingo; M. d'Andelot, of Franche-Comté, an ex-officer; M. du Petit-Thouars, an old naval officer, with a remarkable record for adventure and suffering; and several other

ecclesiastics, merchants, and nobles. Thomas Twining, an Englishman, in his "Travels in America," says that he met the Count de Noailles, Count Tilley, and Volney, at the house of Mr. Bingham, in Philadelphia, in 1795; and that he saw walking in Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, "a tall gentleman in a blue coat, pointed out as M. Talleyrand."* There were several French ladies of high rank and good education among the refugees on the Susquehanna, and a spirit of cheerful adventure pervaded the community. There can be scarcely any doubt that our young English collegians had their thoughts directed to America by hearing or reading some account of this colony.

Public interest in Dr. Priestley's settlement at Northumberland in Pennsylvania was very lively. For many years he had been the leader of the English Unitarians, and his name had been associated, whether justly or not, with that of Paine as that of a chief enemy of the British Constitution. Hundreds of attacks upon his religious and political opinions had appeared within the space of half a dozen years, in pamphlets, treatises, satirical poems, and printed sermons. No name appears so frequently as his among the book reviews of *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *The Monthly Review* between 1789 and 1796. His personal character was not spared by enemies both open and secret, though in no respect was its integrity really involved. Learned opponents, especially at Cambridge, were never weary of combining criticism of his chemical theories with charges of theological unsoundness. Now curiosity followed him beyond the Atlantic, while the malignity which had hounded him from England turned in triumph upon those of his way of thinking who remained. The pressure of Conservative opinion was enormous and unrelenting.

The poem "Guilt and Sorrow" contains faint but hardly mistakable traces of Godwin's philosophy and of Fawcett's teaching. It was not published as a whole until 1842, when it had been considerably altered. We

* J. G. Rosengarten, "French Colonists and Exiles in the United States," p. 129.

may judge of the nature of the changes by comparing the thirty stanzas extracted from their setting, and printed in 1798 as "The Female Vagrant," with their final form. Though much of this part was, according to Wordsworth's recollection, composed in 1791 and 1792, the first draft of the entire poem was certainly not completed before 1794, and the work was rehandled in 1795. The action is represented as taking place during the American War. The leading psychological motive of the Sailor's story, which was composed later than the Woman's story, is the same as one which was presently to appear again in "The Borderers"—namely, that "sin and crime are apt to start from their very opposite qualities," a statement to which Godwin would have given his assent, and which is easily recognized as conformable to his view of human nature. Political disaffection shows itself in the fifth and sixth stanzas of "The Female Vagrant" as originally printed, where the legalized oppression of a poor man by his neighbour, a rich land-owner, is feelingly described. This passage was afterwards completely altered, being represented finally by the vague statement:

> But through severe mischance and cruel wrong,
> My father's substance fell into decay.

It is significant that another passage in the thirty stanzas originally printed as "The Female Vagrant" was also softened later into a far less bitter indictment of society. One of the main sources of evil represented in the Woman's story as well as in the Man's is war. In the fragment printed in 1798, the soldiery after whom the poor creature has dragged herself through America are called

> the brood
> That lap (their very nourishment) their brothers' blood.

This was omitted in all editions after 1800, and if similar features once existed in the Sailor's story, as is probable from the fact that a like fate had dragged him from his peaceful home and made him a man of blood against his will, they too have been expunged. There remains

only an ironical reference to "social Order's care for wretchedness." As "Guilt and Sorrow" was finally published, it contained not a word against capital punishment, but ends with the poor Sailor's voluntary submission to the law, which avenges in his person a crime for which he has atoned, and the guilt of which has left no stain upon his soul. Here was ample opportunity to illustrate Godwin's doctrine of the injustice of retributive punishment, and especially of the death penalty. If the poem originally ended with such an illustration, Wordsworth in 1842 of course would not have let such an ending stand, for he had meanwhile, as if in expiation of former laxity, published fourteen sonnets in favour of capital punishment! But it is almost inconceivable that the poem in 1794 concluded with this note of acquiescence in the wisdom of an institution which not only Godwin's book, but events in France, had brought in question. The structural lines of the poem seem to converge towards something which they never reach, some passage of protest and revolt. Furthermore, in a letter to his friend Francis Wrangham, written November 20, 1795, Wordsworth says that he desired to publish a poem, the object of which "is partly to expose the vices of the penal law, and the calamities of war, as they affect individuals." It expressed his sentiments at that time no less than at an earlier period, for he declared that he had recently made alterations and additions so material that it might be looked on almost as another work. It is also evident from this letter that the poet had recently been with Wrangham in London, where he had read to his friend the first draft of this poem, and had planned others, of a satirical character, dealing with political questions. It would appear that he delayed realizing Dorothy's dream of a reunion and life in a cottage, in order to try once more to gain a livelihood by direct application of his powers to public affairs. Perhaps also much time was required to secure and invest the legacy of £900.

CHAPTER IX

DOROTHY

MEANWHILE Dorothy had to exercise patience. She spent the spring and summer and part of the autumn of 1595 near Halifax, with her relative Mrs. Rawson, and was more or less in touch with Jane Pollard, so that apparently no letters passed between them. Besides, the latter was preparing for her marriage with Mr. Marshall, which took place before September 2. On that date we have the first record of a new life about to begin for the long-separated brother and sister, a life destined to be happy for them and memorable for mankind.

"I am now going to tell you," she writes to Mrs. Marshall, "what is for your own eyes and ears alone; I need say no more than this, I am sure, to insure your most careful secrecy. Know then that I am going to live in Dorsetshire. Let me, however, methodically state the whole plan, and then, my dearest Jane, I doubt not you will rejoice in the prospect which at last opens before me of having, at least for a time, a comfortable home and a house of my own. You know the pleasure I have always attached to the idea of home, a blessing which I so early lost (though made up to me as well as the most affectionate care of relatives not positively congenial in pursuits and pleasures could do, and with separate and distinct views)."

Then follows a careful computation of the means which will enable her and William to maintain themselves. The house in which they expect to live belongs, she says, "to a Mr. Pinney, a very rich merchant of Bristol," who has given it up to his son. The latter, who has hitherto kept it open at some expense, has now offered to let William occupy it.

"He is to come occasionally for a few weeks to stay with us, paying for his board. William is at present staying with the Pinneys at Bristol. The house in

Dorsetshire is furnished, and has a garden and orchard. I have great satisfaction in thinking that William will have such opportunities of studying as will be advantageous not only to his mind, but his purse. Living in the unsettled way in which he has hitherto lived in London is altogether unfavourable to mental exertion."

Raisley Calvert's legacy is about to be invested. "William finds that he can get 9 per cent. for the money upon the best security. He means to sink half of it upon my life, which will make me always comfortable and independent."

It is probable that Wordsworth was introduced to the Pinneys by Basil Montagu, at whose house in London he had been recently staying. He left his books there, and wrote to Mathews several weeks later, asking him to have them packed. Montagu, who was of the same age as the poet, had been with him at Cambridge, where he resided till 1795. He was a natural son of the Earl of Sandwich, who acknowledged him and left him a legacy, which, however, failed to reach its destination. Montagu then, in 1795, began to read law, and engaged in literary work. He was assisted later in life by Wordsworth's intimate friend, Francis Wrangham, in his edition of Bacon, and maintained a lifelong friendship with Coleridge and Wordsworth. His opinions were always liberal; in his youth and early manhood they were extremely radical. He is said to have been so zealous a follower of Godwin that at one time he thought seriously of relinquishing the profession of a lawyer on the ground that it was injurious to society. His first wife, whom he married in the year of his graduation, and with whom he kept house in Cambridge while Wordsworth was still at college, died in childbirth, leaving him a son named Edward. This is the boy referred to in an "Anecdote for Fathers," and the lines beginning "It is the first mild day of March." In their letters William and Dorothy call the child Basil. It is to him that she now refers as follows, in estimating their means of livelihood: "I think I told you that Mr. Montagu had a little boy, who, as you will perceive, could not be very

well taken care of, either in his father's chambers, or under the uncertain management of various friends of Mr. M., with whom he has frequently stayed. Lamenting this, he proposed to William to allow him £50 a year for his board, provided I should approve of the plan." The motherly instincts of this young woman of twenty-three, which had already prompted her to keep a little school for her neighbours' children at Forncett, must have been gratified with this prospect. She even mentions an extension of the idea, for she adds:

"A natural daughter of Mr. Tom Myers (a cousin of mine whom I dare say you have heard me mention) is coming over to England by one of the first ships, which is expected in about a month, to be educated. She is, I believe, about three or four years old, and T. Myers' brother, who has charge of her, has requested that I should take her under my care. With these two children, and the produce of Raisley Calvert's legacy, we shall have an income of at least £170 or £180 per annum. . . . As for the little girl, I shall feel myself as a mother to her. . . . It is a painful idea that one's existence is of very little use, which I have been always obliged to feel hitherto. . . . I shall have to join William at Bristol, and proceed hence in a chaise with Basil to Racedown; it is fifty miles. I have received a very polite invitation from the Pinneys to stay at their house on my road."

Apparently the little girl did not join them, nor did Mr. Pinney's thirteen-year-old boy, whom William hoped to have as a pupil, and it is not likely that their income was nearly as large as she expected. But they had the cares and delights of young Basil's company for several years, and a realization of this fact helps us to understand many traits in Wordsworth's early poems. He keeps child nature constantly in view. The joyousness, the wonder, the power of concealment, the susceptibility to keen and unspeakable grief, the subtle and devious ways of reasoning, which are some of the strongest traits of childhood, are felt in many a poem which Wordsworth wrote before he had observed children of his own. One of the deepest peculiarities of his poetry is that it conveys

a sense of having been written, not for children, but with consciousness of how a child thinks.

Miss Wordsworth's letter contains one more remark about her brother, which raises several interesting questions. She says: "By the bye, I must not forget to tell you that he has had the offer of ten guineas for a work which has not taken him much time, and half the profits of a second edition if it should be called for." To what work does this refer? Beyond reasonable doubt to "Guilt and Sorrow." As finally published, this poem contains 666 lines. We have seen that it once had a different ending and a different emphasis. To give a well-proportioned weight to its original "objects," which then were dear to the poet's heart, it must have been longer than it is in its present form. And even were this not the case, the poem would have been long enough for publication in a volume by itself. In the original editions, "An Evening Walk" contained only 430 lines, and "Descriptive Sketches" 813. It is evidently the same work that Wordsworth describes to Wrangham less than three months later in terms which unmistakably refer to "Guilt and Sorrow." He writes of it then as follows: "Have you any interest with the booksellers? I have a poem which I should wish to dispose of, provided I could get anything for it. I recollect reading the first draft of it to you in London." To the same correspondent he writes on March 7, 1796:

"I mean to publish a volume. Could you engage to get rid for me of a dozen copies or more among your numerous acquaintance? The damages — to use a Lancashire phrase—will be four or five shillings per copy. I do not mean to put forth a formal subscription; but could wish, upon my acquaintances and *their* acquaintances, to quarter so many as would insure me from positive loss; further this adventurer wisheth not."

And on the same day Dorothy writes to Mrs. Marshall: "William is going to publish a poem. The Pinneys have taken it to the booksellers." May not the explanation of these various passages be that, while at Bristol towards the end of the summer, Wordsworth

showed what he had written of "Guilt and Sorrow," or spoke of it, to the enterprising and ambitious publisher Joseph Cottle; that Cottle made him a tentative or conditional offer; that this was presently withdrawn or not accepted; that the poet then, as his November letter shows, thought of finding a London publisher; that failing in this, he sent it again to Cottle by the Pinneys? In any case, his efforts were unsuccessful, though Cottle in the end did publish the extract known as "The Female Vagrant" with the other "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798. The fact that Cottle in his "Early Recollections; chiefly relating to the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge," 1837, makes no reference to having met Wordsworth so early as 1795, nor to any negotiations of this kind, may be explained by his extraordinary vanity and his well-known lack of scruple about garbling letters and incidents. The pride of his life was to have been one of the early friends and helpers of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. He was quite capable of suppressing the evidence of a false start with one of them. Had the offer of ten guineas come from a London publisher, Wordsworth, one is almost forced to think, would have communicated the fact to Wrangham when touching on the subject of his proposed volume.

It is strange that no record of the first meeting between Wordsworth and Coleridge has come down to us. Something like the awe that Dante felt when he pondered on the results of the descent of Æneas to the "immortal world,"

> pensando l' alto effetto
> Ch' uscir dovea di lui, e 'l chi, e 'l quale,

creeps over one who attempts to weigh the consequences of that event. It occurred, I believe, somewhat earlier than has been generally supposed. Bishop Wordsworth in the "Memoirs" makes no mention of it at all. He does not introduce Coleridge upon the scene before June, 1797. J. Dykes Campbell, whose authority regarding facts in the life of Coleridge was unsurpassed, says with his customary caution, in his "Life of Coleridge": "The precise date of the first meeting of Coleridge and Words-

worth has not been ascertained, but a careful examination of all the evidence available, published and unpublished, has all but convinced me that it may have probably taken place as early as September, 1795."

As we have already seen, Coleridge was an enthusiastic admirer of Wordsworth's poems in November, 1793, when he discussed them with Christopher Wordsworth at Cambridge. They had many friends in common. It was known in the London circle which Wordsworth frequented that Coleridge, Southey, and other young men, were planning to emigrate to America. Their centre of operations was Bristol. The plan, which came to be known as the Pantisocratic Scheme, was probably conceived in the spring of 1794, and matured, if the wild scheme could ever be termed mature, during a visit Coleridge, then a Cambridge undergraduate, made to Southey at Oxford in the following summer. The most trustworthy account of it is given in a letter from Southey to Cottle in 1836, quoted by Campbell in his "Life of Coleridge":

"In the summer of 1794 S. T. Coleridge and Hucks came to Oxford on their way into Wales for a pedestrian tour. Then Allen introduced them to me, and the scheme was talked of, but not by any means determined on. It was talked into shape by Burnett and myself, when, upon the commencement of the long vacation, we separated from them, they making for Gloucester, he and I proceeding on foot to Bath. After some weeks, S. T. C., returning from his tour, came to Bristol on his way, and slept there. Then it was that we resolved upon going to America, and S. T. C. and I walked into Somersetshire to see Burnett, and on that journey it was that he first saw Poole. He made his engagement with Miss [Sarah] Fricker on our return from this journey at my mother's house in Bath, not a little to my astonishment, because he had talked of being deeply in love with a certain Mary Evans. I had previously been engaged to my poor Edith [Fricker]. . . . He remained at Bristol till the close of the vacation [?]—several weeks. During that time it was that we talked of America. The funds were to be what each could raise—S. T. C. by the Specimens of the Modern Latin

Poets, for which he had printed proposals, and obtained a respectable list of Cambridge subscribers before I knew him; I, by Joan of Arc, and what else I might publish. I had no . . . other expectation. We hoped to find companions with money."

A much more detailed account, and the earliest of which I have any knowledge, is a letter from Thomas Poole to a Mr. Haskins, written September 20, 1794. Poole was an energetic and wealthy young tanner, of democratic principles, who lived at Nether Stowey, in Somerset, about thirty-five miles from Bristol:

"DEAR SIR,—I received your obliging letter a day or two ago, and will with pleasure give you all the information I can respecting the emigration to America to which you allude. But first, perhaps, you would like to have some idea of the character of the projectors of the scheme. Out of eight whom they informed me were engaged, I have seen but two, and only spent part of one day with them; their names are Coldridge and Southey.

"Coldridge, whom I consider the Principal in the undertaking, and of whom I had heard much before I saw him, is about five-and-twenty, belongs to the University of Cambridge, possesses splendid abilities—he is, I understand, a shining scholar, gained the prize for the Greek verses the first or second year he entered the University, and is now engaged in publishing a selection of the best modern Latin poems with a poetical translation. He speaks with much elegance and energy, and with uncommon facility, but he, as it generally happens to men of his class, feels the justice of Providence in the want of those inferior abilities which are necessary to the rational discharge of the common duties of life. His aberrations from prudence, to use his own expression, have been great; but he now promises to be as sober and rational as his most sober friends could wish. In religion, he is a Unitarian, if not a Deist; on politicks a Democrat, to the utmost extent of the word.

"Southey, who was with him, is of the University of Oxford, a younger man, without the splendid abilities of Coldridge, though possessing much information, particularly metaphysical, and is more violent in his principles than even Coldridge himself. In Religion, shocking to say in a mere Boy as he is, I fear he wavers between Deism and Atheism.

"Thus much for the characters of two of the Emigrators. Their plan is as follows:

"Twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles are to embark with twelve ladies in April next. Previous to their leaving this country they are to have as much intercourse as possible, in order to ascertain each other's dispositions, and firmly to settle every regulation for the government of their future conduct. Their opinion was that they should fix themselves at—I do not recollect the place, but somewhere in a delightful part of the new back settlements; that each man should labour two or three hours in a day, the produce of which labour would, they imagine, be more than sufficient to support the colony. As Adam Smith observes that there is not above one productive man in twenty, they argue that if each laboured the twentieth part of time, it would produce enough to satisfy their wants. The produce of their industry is to be laid up in common for the use of all; and a good library of books is to be collected, and their leisure hours to be spent in study, liberal discussions, and the education of their children. A system for the education of their children is laid down, for which, if this plan at all suits you, I must refer you to the authors of it. The regulations relating to the females strikes them as the most difficult; whether the marriage contracts shall be dissolved if agreeable to one or both parties, and many other circumstances, are not yet determined. The employments of the women are to be the care of infant children, and other occupations suited to their strength; at the same time the greatest attention is to be paid to the cultivation of their minds. Every one is to enjoy his own religious and political opinions, provided they do not encroach on the rules previously made, which rules, it is unnecessary to add, must in some measure be regulated by the laws of the State which includes the district in which they settle. They calculate that each gentleman providing £125 will be sufficient to carry the scheme into execution. Finally, every individual is at liberty, whenever he pleases, to withdraw from the society."

By the autumn of 1795 the Pantisocratic dream had almost faded away. The adventurers had consumed part of their energies in writing a drama, "The Fall of Robespierre," which Coleridge, Southey, and Lovell planned, and the first two wrote. Coleridge returned to Cam-

bridge, but left college in December without taking his degree. Forgetting both the Susquehanna and his Sarah, he sought out his old schoolmate Charles Lamb, and was enjoying the freedom of bachelorhood and the conveniences of civilization at the Angel tavern or "the little smoky room at the Salutation and Cat," where, as his companion wrote, they "sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy." But Southey went to London to look for him, and brought him back to his lady at Bristol. Here they both, with Burnett, another of the band, lodged together and once more began to think seriously of America. Lovell was the first to take a practical step, by marrying Mary Fricker. Coleridge made a little money by lecturing. Joseph Cottle, himself only twenty-four years old, and a poet, but not a friend of Pantisocracy, helped the comrades to pay their bills by advancing money on poems written and unwritten.

The friendship between Coleridge and Southey became strained before the middle of 1795. It was at this time, I am inclined to think, that Wordsworth met them. Their fortunes were desperate. Their rose-coloured vision had faded away. The great contrast between their characters had begun to show itself. And although they kept their engagements and espoused each of them a Miss Fricker, marriage was no longer a move towards the communal life, with two or three hours a day of farming, on the banks of the Susquehanna. In estimating the likelihood that Wordsworth, if he remained any time at all in Bristol, would encounter this band of young men, several facts must be taken into consideration. They were persons of marked peculiarity. Cottle, in his very natural desire to provide a market for their literary efforts, would be sure to talk about them. Coleridge was "a noticeable man" and gave public lectures. Southey was a native of Bristol and well connected. They were all very young—Southey was twenty-one in August. Their peculiarities of manner, dress, and especially of opinion, must have made them objects of curiosity or alarm

to the heavy-going merchants of that rich port, which still profited largely by the slave-trade. The town, including the suburbs, had only about 60,000 inhabitants.

It was in August that Coleridge took a cottage at Clevedon, on the Bristol Channel, about twelve miles south-west of the city. In his volume of Poems published in 1796, the lines entitled "The Eolian Harp" are declared to have been "composed August 20, 1795, at Clevedon, Somersetshire." But as he was not married until October 4, it is not likely that he removed thither before that date. Coleridge's daughter Sara, seeking information as to the time of the first meeting of the poets, received the following answer from Mrs. Wordsworth, November 7, 1845:

"With my husband's tender love to you he bids me say, in reply to a question you have put to him through Miss Fenwick, that he has not as distinct a remembrance as he could wish of the time when he first saw your father and your uncle Southey; but the impression upon his mind is that he first saw them both, and your aunt Edith at the same time, in a lodging in Bristol. This must have been about the year 1795."

Racedown is the name of a farm in Dorsetshire. It lies seven miles back from the shore of the English Channel, to the north-east of Lyme Regis, and is about equally distant from Lyme, Beaminster, Crewkerne, and Chard. A sharp point of Devonshire almost touches it, and Ottery St. Mary in that county, the birthplace of Coleridge, is only twenty-four miles distant. The land lies along the bed of a small water-course that winds between bold hills. In sheltered parts it is fertile, and vegetation is abundant. But where the ground rises above the common level, the trees are stunted and bend weirdly in one direction, away from the sea. Heavy, flat-topped hills, that look like elephants' brows, push southward as if they still held the ocean at bay. On the highest of them, its immense flank rising from the edge of the Racedown fields, the green ramparts of an ancient "camp" still

overlook the Channel. From the roads that follow the trend of the streams glimpses of blue water show themselves here and there as the valleys open out southward. Through these immense funnels the wind brings the scent and the sound of the sea, and the place is never quiet, for all its seclusion. The house is a stiff, dignified brick building, covered now with grey plaster. It looks comfortable, though a little gloomy, not grand enough to be called a country-seat nor plain enough to be called a farmhouse. The country even now is rather thinly settled. There are no large villages near. Three miles away, at the hamlet of Broadwindsor, is the ancestral home of the Pinney family. The owner of Racedown in 1795 was John Preter, who took the name of Pinney on succeeding to the estate in 1762. He was at one time High Sheriff of Dorset, and had two sons, John Frederick and Charles, and two daughters.

The Wordsworths went to Racedown in September, 1795. The next date in connection with their life there is November 20, when William addressed a letter to Wrangham from "Racedown Cottage, near Crewkerne." He was still busy with a task he and Wrangham had undertaken together, which was the composition of satires on public men and measures, in imitation of Juvenal. Among the objects of derision were King George, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Norfolk, and, doubtless for private reasons, the Earl of Lonsdale. The specimen lines given in this letter are enough to make one thankful on many accounts—of which prudence is not the chief—that the rash satirist learned to suppress his rage.

In another but undated letter to Wrangham from Racedown containing satirical verses occurs the following passage on the Prince Regent:

> The nation's hope shall show the present time
> As rich in folly as the past in crime.
> Do arts like these a royal mind evince ?
> Are these the studies that beseem a prince ?
> Wedged in with blacklegs at a boxers' show,
> To shout with transport at a knock-down blow—

'Mid knots of grooms, the council of his state,
To scheme and counter-scheme for purse and plate.
Thy ancient honours when shalt thou resume ?
Oh shame, is this thy service' boastful plume ?—
Go, modern Prince ! at Henry's tomb proclaim
Thy rival triumphs, thy Newmarket fame,
There hang thy trophies—bid the jockey's vest,
The whip, the cap, and spurs thy fame attest.

In the letter of November 20 he sends Wrangham more of his imitations, including a very daring couplet:

Heavens ! who sees majesty in George's face ?
Or looks at Norfolk, and can dream of grace ?

And of this he says:

"The two best verses of this extract were given me by Southey, a friend of Coleridge's: 'Who sees majesty,' etc. He supplied me with another line which I think worth adopting. We mention Lord Courtenay: Southey's verse is, 'Whence have I fallen ? alas ! what have I done ?' a literal translation of the Courtenay motto, 'Unde lapsus ? quid feci ?'"

It is in this letter also that Wordsworth mentions "Guilt and Sorrow":

"I have a poem which I should wish to dispose of provided I could get anything for it. . . . Its object is partly to expose the vices of the penal law, and the calamities of war as they affect individuals."

We may gain some idea of his poverty and the deep seclusion of Racedown from the following passage:

"You flattered me with a hope that, by your assistance, I might be supplied with the Morning Chronicle; have you spoken to the editors about it ? If it could be managed, I should be much pleased; as we only see here a provincial weekly paper, and I cannot afford to have the Chronicle at my own expense. I have said nothing of Racedown. It is an excellent house and the country far from unpleasant, but as for society we must manufacture it ourselves. Will you come and help us ? We expect Montagu at Christmas, and should be very glad if you could make it convenient to come along with him. If not, at all events, we shall hope to see you in the course of the next summer."

In another letter to Wrangham, apparently of not much later date, he says: "We have neither magazine, review, nor any new publication whatever." He modestly declines to set up as a schoolmaster, saying: "As to your promoting my interest in the way of pupils, upon a review of my own attainments I think there is so little that I am able to teach that this scheme may be suffered to fly quietly away to the paradise of fools."

The two letters contain 158 lines of the satires, but as they stand they scarcely make sense. Their purport, however, is plain enough, and the poet's nephew described them with precision when he wrote: "These specimens exhibit poetical vigour, combined with no little asperity and rancour against the abuses of the time, and the vices of the ruling powers, and the fashionable corruptions of aristocratical society." The most vivid picture in the fragments is that of a subservient Parliament and the mad King:

> So patient Senates quibble by the hour
> And prove with endless tongues a monarch's power,
> Or whet his kingly faculties to chase
> Legions of devils through a keyhole's space.

Wrangham was a prolific author of verse and prose, but I have discovered nothing in his writings which indicates that he ever published his part of this joint production. Wordsworth was even then finding more congenial modes of expression, and it was not to be expected that a man of so little practical experience of public life, and living far, moreover, from the scene of combat, could continue to criticize passing events with the light and yet penetrating touch that satire demands. And so he, too, suppressed his part of this adventure. He was already engaged upon another. He announced to Wrangham: "I have been employed lately in writing a tragedy—the first draft of which is nearly finished." The same letter contains a humorous allusion to Godwin's curious doctrine on the subject of promises, and another profession of poverty. Ten to one, he says, he will not be able to release Wrangham's reply from the

post-office unless it is franked. He has been living lately, he gaily says, upon air and the essence of carrots, cabbages, turnips, and other esculent vegetables, not excluding parsley, the produce of his garden.

In another letter to Wrangham, dated March 7 (1796 evidently), he congratulates him, somewhat jocosely, on having been presented to a very rich living, as Rector of Hunmanby, in Yorkshire, and expresses a hope that his friend will now, "like every sensible rich man," turn his thoughts towards travel. This, we may be sure, is what he would have done himself, for he was always possessed with a love of wandering, and gratified it frequently when his circumstances permitted, and even sometimes when they seemed very unpropitious. He says he does not mean "to drop the Juvenal scheme," and has been working at it that morning. "We have had the two Pinneys with us," he remarks, "John for a month. They left us yesterday, and, as I now feel a return of literary appetite, I mean to take a snack of satire by way of sandwich." Alluding again to Wrangham's promotion and to Montagu's ill-fortune in losing his father's legacy, he says: "I have been engaged an hour and a half this morning in hewing wood and rooting up hedges, and I think it no bad employment to feel 'the penalty of Adam' in this way. Some of our friends have not been so lucky, witness poor Montagu." In a postscript he adds: "Basil is quite well, *quant au physique, mais pour le moral, il y a bien à craindre.* Among other things, he lies like a little devil."

On March 21, 1796, and this time in a letter to Mathews, he writes:

"I was tolerably industrious in reading, if reading can ever deserve the name of industry, till our good friends the Pinneys came among us; and I have since returned to my books. As to writing, it is out of the question. Not, however, entirely to forget the world, I season my recollection of some of its objects with a little ill-nature—I attempt to write satires; and in all satires, whatever the authors may say, there will be found a spice of malignity."

Years afterwards, in 1807, Wordsworth forbade Wrangham to publish these verses, alleging with great solemnity that he had "long since come to a fixed determination to steer clear of personal satire." Many reasons had, moreover, by that time made it undesirable that his name should be mentioned in connection with the work.

It is amazing how numerous were the ties that bound Wordsworth's youthful friends to one another. It is evident that Mathews, too, was acquainted with the Pinneys, for the poet writes to him:

"I fully expected to hear from you by Azar Pinney [Azariah is a name that occurs several times in the Pinney pedigree], and was not a little surprised you omitted so good an opportunity of sending me the volume of fugitive poetry."

And then, referring perhaps to the Cannonian Club, to which Holcroft and some of his friends, as we have seen, belonged, he continues:

"Pray write to me at length, and give me an account of your proceedings in the Society, or any other information likely to interest me. Are your members much increased? and what is of more consequence, have you improved I do not ask in the [art] of speaking, but in the more important one of thinking?"

The Pinneys probably brought a copy of Southey's epic poem, "Joan of Arc," which Wordsworth criticizes severely, in a passage from which I infer that the young Oxford poet was known personally, and unfavourably, to Mathews. Montagu has sent a copy of the second edition of "Political Justice," and the recluse shows his previous acquaintance with the work by remarking that he expects to find it much improved. He thinks the preface badly written. "Give me some news about the theatre," he begs; "I have attempted to read Holcroft's Man of Ten Thousand, but such stuff." And after beseeching Mathews to come and visit him, he says: "My sister would be very glad of your assistance in her Italian studies. She has already gone through half of

Davila,* and yesterday we began Ariosto." From these few lines of Wordsworth's, and with the knowledge that he was then composing his tragedy "The Borderers," we may form some idea of how he employed himself during the twenty-two months, more or less, that he lived at Racedown. There is here no trace whatever of that mental depression, that clouding of his spiritual faculties, that moroseness, which we have been so often told worked a crisis in his life and particularly characterized the early months of his residence in Dorsetshire. Affecting pictures have again and again been drawn of a young sufferer, his heart chilled, his intellect sated, by the sophistries of rationalism, creeping to this lonely place, and here recovering his faith through the ministrations of his sister and the kindly influence of nature. Some very small degree of truth perhaps there is in these descriptions. They find a general warrant in certain passages of "The Prelude" and "The Excursion." And after the crowding experiences of the preceding eight years, with their frequent changes of scene, their homeless wanderings, their generous hopes, and sharp disappointments, after keen intercourse with men struggling to establish new and despised systems, after the distress due to his false step with Annette, after the miserable life of cities, we might expect to find him weary and longing for a chance to think out his future course; but in his letters from Racedown there is of all this not a word. We see him more cheerful than he was a year before, in the north, and intellectually more active; we feel in what he writes to Wrangham and Mathews an abounding energy, and, above all, a tone of self-confidence. Moreover, there is here no hint that he has broken or desired to break with his old connections in London. Politics, the theatre, the books of his acquaintances, still interest him. He begs eagerly to be kept informed of what is going on in the world. He gives absolutely no ground to suppose that he has been

* If this was Davila's "Istoria delle Guerre civili di Francia," an ancient copy of which was catalogued among Wordsworth's books after his death, it was rather solid reading for a beginner.

disillusioned with regard to the social and religious views professed by himself and his friends. The causes of his retirement, he gives it to be understood, are poverty and a wish to study. If he was ever to carry out the long-cherished plan of living with his sister, the opportunity of having a large house in the country, rent-free, and in a place where his little income would go farthest, was not to be rejected. The quiet of Racedown gave him a chance to do some extensive reading, which included many works of modern European literature, and especially books of travel. The fact that he was writing a tragedy is no proof that his own mood was tragic.

Perhaps, then, in Dorothy's letters from Racedown we shall find evidence in support of the traditional theory. Perhaps in her simpler though not more open-hearted style, she will reveal his secret grief. But this is not so. She gives a charming and harmonious picture of domestic happiness. They are both busy with their reading and the education of little Basil. Visitors are few. They fare plainly, but pleasantly. They enjoy their big house. The country round about draws them forth on long walks. She is perfectly happy, perfectly in accord with her brother, zealous to have him succeed in his work. There is nothing whatever to suggest that she is trying "to win him back" to something that he has left behind.

Her letters from Racedown to Mrs. Marshall are most engaging. She begins to reveal in them for the first time her extraordinary gift of direct observation and accurate description. Her remarks on the bringing up of children are very sound for a girl of twenty-three, and the plan she was following in the case of Basil shows that she had some acquaintance with Rousseau's theory. The first letter is dated November 30, and opens with an apology for not writing sooner after her arrival:

"We are now surrounded with winter prospects without doors, and within have only winter occupations, books, solitude, and the fireside; yet I may safely say we are never dull. Basil is a charming boy; he

affords us perpetual entertainment. Do not suppose from this that we make him our perpetual plaything, far otherwise. I think that is one of the modes of treatment most likely to ruin a child's temper and character; but I do not think there is any pleasure more delightful than that of marking the development of a child's faculties and observing his little occupations. We found everything at Racedown much more complete with respect to household conveniences than I could have expected. You may judge of this when I tell you that we have not had to lay out ten shillings on the house. We were a whole month without a servant, but now we have got one of the nicest girls I ever saw; she suits us exactly, and I have all my domestic concerns so arranged that everything goes on with the utmost regularity. . . . We walk about two hours every morning. We have many very pleasant walks about us; and, what is a great advantage, the roads are of a sandy kind and almost always dry. We can see the sea 150 or 200 yards from the door, and, at a little distance, have a very extensive view terminated by the sea, seen through different openings of the unequal hills. We have not the warmth and luxuriance of Devonshire, though there is no want either of wood or cultivation; but the trees appear to suffer from the sea-blasts. We have hills which—seen from a distance—almost take the character of mountains; some cultivated nearly to their summits, others in a wild state, covered with furze and broom. These delight me the most, as they remind me of our native wilds. . . . I have had only one great disappointment since we came, and that is about the little girl. I lament it the more, as I am sure if her father knew all the circumstances, he would wish her to be placed under our care. Mr. Montagu intended being with us a month ago, but we have not seen him yet. I have the satisfaction of thinking that he will see great improvements in Basil."

Towards the conclusion of this, her first letter from Racedown to Mrs. Marshall, Dorothy makes a statement which shows that the ties which bound her brother to France were by no means yet broken, and that they were known to her and to her friend: "William has had a letter from France since we came here. Annette mentions having despatched half a dozen, none of which

he has received." She has an eye for the condition of the poor country-people about her, which compared unfavourably with that of the Cumberland and Westmorland "statesmen." "The peasants are miserably poor," she writes; "their cottages are shapeless structures of wood and clay: indeed, they are not at all beyond what might be expected in savage life." Appearances at least have much improved since.

In another letter to Mrs. Marshall, written evidently on March 7, 1796, she says:

"We have not seen Mr. Montagu, which disappointed us greatly. . . . The Pinneys have been with us five weeks, one week at Christmas and a month since. They left us yesterday. We all enjoyed ourselves very much. They seemed to relish the pleasures of our fireside in the evening and the excursion of the morning. They are very amiable young men, particularly the elder. He is two and twenty, has a charming countenance, and the sweetest temper I ever observed. He has travelled a good deal in the way of education, been at one of the great schools, and at Oxford, has always had plenty of money to spend. This instead of having spoiled him, or made him conceited, has wrought the pleasantest effects. He is well informed, has an uncommonly good heart, and is very agreeable in conversation. He has no profession. His brother has been brought up a merchant. . . . We have read a good deal while they were with us (for they are fond of reading), but we have not gone on with our usual regularity. When the weather was fine they were out generally all the morning, walking sometimes. Then, I went with them frequently, riding sometimes, hunting, coursing, cleaving wood—a very desirable employment, and what all housekeepers would do well to recommend to the young men of their household in such a cold country as this, for it produces warmth both within and without doors."

Lovers of English poetry may congratulate themselves that this method of employing handsome young visitors did not have the same results at Racedown as on Prospero's enchanted isle. It is pleasant, though rather startling, to think of Dorothy Wordsworth coursing hares and fox-hunting.

"I have not spoken of Basil yet," she continues. "He is my perpetual pleasure, quite metamorphosed from a shivering half-starved plant to a lusty, blooming, fearless boy. He dreads neither cold nor rain. He has played frequently for an hour or two without appearing sensible that the rain was pouring down upon him, or the wind blowing about him. I have had a melancholy letter from Mary Hutchinson. I fear that Margaret is dead before this time. She was then attending her at Sockburn, without the least hope of her recovery. Last year at this time we were all together, and little supposed that any of us was so near death."

She tells of a grand dinner-party they gave while the Pinneys were with them, to which they invited their neighbours: "and very dull it was, except for the entertainment of talking about it before and after." She gives a glimpse of her more serious life:

"I am studying my Italian very hard. I am reading the Fool of Quality, which amuses me exceedingly. Within the last month I have read Tristram Shandy, Brydone's Sicily and Malta, and Moore's Travels in France. I have also read lately Madame Roland's Memoirs and some other French things."

She mentions that her brother and the Pinneys had been at Crewkerne to dinner, and were detained by a fire. In another letter, dated March 19, and postmarked "Crewkerne, Mar. 27, 97," she describes at considerable length their method of managing and teaching little Basil. It all sounds like a page from "Emile."

"We teach him nothing at present," she says, "but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an insatiable curiosity, which we are always careful to satisfy to the best of our ability. It is directed to everything he sees, the sky, the fields, trees, shrubs, corn, the making of tools, carts, etc. He knows his letters, but we have not attempted any further step in the path of *book-learning*. Our grand study has been to make him *happy*, in which we have not been altogether disappointed. . . . We have no punishments, except such as appear to be, so far as we can determine, the immediate consequences that grow out of the offence."

She says that Montagu had come to them unexpectedly, and that he and William had started that morning for Bristol, where they were to spend about a fortnight. A year before—in March, 1796—Coleridge was at Bristol, getting out, with what excitement can be imagined, the first four numbers of *The Watchman*, a periodical miscellany, intended, as the Prospectus declared, "to proclaim the State of the Political Atmosphere, and preserve Freedom and her Friends from the attacks of Robbers and Assassins!!" In the spring of 1796, while he was "on Watch," as he says, Coleridge wrote to Cottle declaring his intention of giving away a sheet full of sonnets, one to Mrs. Barbauld, one to Wakefield, the radical pamphleteer, one to Dr. Beddoes, one to Wrangham, whom he calls "a college acquaintance of mine, an admirer of me, and a pitier of my principles," one to C. Lamb, one to Wordsworth, etc. Coleridge, Lamb, Wrangham, and Wordsworth! The lines were already converging. In a long letter to Thelwall, dated May 13, 1796, Coleridge refers unmistakably to Wordsworth, though without naming him. "A very dear friend of mine," he says, "who is, in my opinion, the best poet of the age (I will send you his poem when published), thinks that the lines from 364 to 375 and from 403 to 428 are the best in the volume,—indeed, worth all the rest." Coleridge is referring here to his own book. He continues: "And this man is a republican, and, at least, a *semi*-atheist."

In March, 1797, Wordsworth would be likely to see Coleridge in Bristol, though by this time *The Watchman* had long since ceased to warn the public, and its editor was living at Nether Stowey. He was not the man to stay in a place because he belonged there, and he is known to have been preaching at this time in the Unitarian chapels of Taunton and Bridgwater, and often went to Bristol. It is more surprising that Wordsworth should have left Racedown at this time, for his old friend and future wife, Mary Hutchinson, was visiting his sister.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

From a drawing by Hancock about 1796

"You perhaps have heard," the latter writes on March 19, 1797, in her enthusiastic way, "that my friend Mary Hutchinson is staying with me. She is the best girl in the world, and we are as happy as human beings can be, that is," she adds ruefully, "when William is at home; for you cannot imagine how dull we feel, and what a vacuum his loss has occasioned, but this is the first day; to-morrow we shall be better; we feel the change more severely as we have lost both Montagu and him at once. M. is so cheerful and made us so merry that we hardly know how to bear the change. Indeed, William is as cheerful as anybody can be; perhaps you may not think it, but he is the life and soul of the whole house."

She writes with the same girlish simplicity that she is excessively pleased with Mr. Montagu, that he is one of the pleasantest men she ever saw, and so amiable and good that everyone must love him.

It may have been during this visit to Bristol that Wordsworth met Thomas Poole, Coleridge's good angel. The following letter shows that Coleridge visited Wordsworth in June, 1797, at Racedown, and indicates besides that the latter already knew Poole and Cottle. Part of it was printed by Cottle in his "Early Recollections," and again, with a wrong date, in his "Reminiscences." J. Dykes Campbell saw the original, and was led to infer from the sentence about Poole that it seemed "to point to a previous visit or visits to Stowey paid by Wordsworth, or to meetings with Poole at Bristol, of which direct record is lacking." A less cautious reader than Campbell might go further, and surmise that this was not the first time Cottle had been informed that Wordsworth had written a play. When the latter left the two young ladies at Racedown mourning his departure, he probably sacrificed inclination to business, and what business could have appeared to him more urgent than the launching of his tragedy? Having done all he could in that direction, in March, he would naturally seek to renew his intercourse with Coleridge, and if he had not met Poole before, he would do so then. Coleridge, as we have seen, returned the visit in June. His

letter from Racedown was finally printed by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, in his "Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," Vol. I., p. 220. The probable date, the editor says, is Thursday, June 8. He notes that "On Monday, June 5, Coleridge breakfasted with Dr. Toulmin, the Unitarian minister at Taunton, and on the evening of that or the next day he arrived on foot at Racedown, some forty miles distant." Omitting three sentences which have reference only to the forthcoming volume of poems, which Cottle was printing, it is as follows:

"*June*, 1797.

"My dear Cottle,—I am sojourning for a few days at Racedown, the mansion of our friend Wordsworth, who has received Fox's 'Achmed.' He returns you his acknowledgments, and presents his kindliest respects to you. I shall be home by Friday—not to-morrow—but the next Friday. . . . Wordsworth admires my tragedy, which gives me great hopes. Wordsworth has written a tragedy himself. I speak with heartfelt sincerity, and (I think) unblinded judgment, when I tell you that I feel myself *a little man by his side*, and yet do not think myself the less man than I formerly thought myself. His drama is absolutely wonderful. You know I do not commonly speak in such abrupt and unmingled phrases, and therefore will the more readily believe me. There are in the piece those *profound* touches of the human heart which I find three or four times in 'The Robbers' of Schiller, and often in Shakespeare, but in Wordsworth there are no *inequalities*. T. Poole's opinion of Wordsworth is that he is the greatest man he ever knew; I coincide.

"It is not impossible that in the course of two or three months I may see you. God bless you and

"S. T. Coleridge."

It would almost appear that the writer, knowing Cottle's amiable ambition to be the publisher of men of poetical genius, was trying to inflame his zeal to the point of undertaking to bring out "The Borderers." It will be observed from the first sentence that Cottle and Wordsworth were already acquainted, though the former is presumed not to have heard of the tragedy.

There could be no more characteristic introduction of

Coleridge as Wordsworth's generous admirer, enthusiastic critic, and intimate friend than this letter. Their paths were drawn together and their destinies united by the same mysterious power that gave to English poetry at almost the same moment a Sidney and a Spenser, and, again, a Marlowe and a Shakespeare. How much help they were to be to each other in the coming years! How they were each to add to the other's poetic vision and poetic faculty! How many sorrows they bore in common and for one another's sake, and how great is the glory they share!

Half a century later, when Dorothy's mind had given way under the strain of too much sympathy and thought, and Coleridge was beyond the touch of infirmity, the aged survivors of that group recalled vividly the happy hour when they all four came together for the first time. Mrs. Wordsworth wrote to Sara Coleridge, November 7, 1845:

"Your father came afterwards to visit us at Racedown, where I was living with my sister. We have both a distinct remembrance of his arrival. He did not keep to the high road, but leaped over a high gate and bounded down the pathless field, by which he cut off an angle. We both retain the liveliest possible image of his appearance at that moment. My poor sister has just been speaking of it to me with much feeling and tenderness."

Were it not for this reminiscence, we should not have known that Mary Hutchinson spent the whole spring at Racedown. She was an eminently cheerful, sensible person, and her presence at the farmhouse could not have been consistent with the melancholy with which an unfounded tradition has invested Wordsworth's residence there. Compared with the bright, open situation of Alfoxden, his next home, Racedown might be considered dark, but when we remember how young its occupants were, and how young all their visitors, fancy loves to picture them chatting gaily about a wood fire in their common parlour, "the prettiest little room that can be," or strolling through the apple orchards,

which were so numerous, Dorothy tells us, that nobody thought of enclosing them, or climbing through yellow furze to the broad top of Pilsdon Pen to gaze upon the English Channel. When Coleridge was there, indoor delights sufficed. He was a man for the fireside and long evenings with books and talk.

"You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge," wrote Dorothy after his departure. "He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mirth, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and—like William—interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain—that is, for about three minutes. He is pale and thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish loose growing half-curling rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, not dark but grey; such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression, but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind. It has more of the 'poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead. The first thing that was read after he came was William's new poem, The Ruined Cottage, with which he was much delighted; and after tea he repeated to us two acts and a half of his tragedy Osorio. The next morning William read his tragedy The Borderers."

Part of the poem here called "The Ruined Cottage" is to be found embedded in "The Excursion." It is the oldest portion of that work—lines 871 to 916 of the first book. Commenting on the passage in 1843, the poet says: "All that relates to Margaret and the ruined cottage, etc., was taken from observations made in the south-west of England." It shows that he was still deeply concerned with the evil effects of war. Margaret is left to grieve amid the ruins of her home because her husband, hopeless through poverty, has "joined a troup of soldiers, going to a distant land." Not only the forty-five lines specified above, but fully half of the book, does this subject occupy. It is impossible to say how much of the original poem has been actually retained.

Two other pieces of verse probably written by Wordsworth at Racedown, or perhaps before he went there, have come down to us. One, entitled "The Birth of Love," appeared under Wordsworth's name in a volume of poems published by Wrangham, and is a translation of some French lines.* Wordsworth never reprinted it. Another, "The Convict," appeared in "Lyrical Ballads," 1798, and was thenceforth dropped from the poet's editions of his works. The contrast in execution between these two pieces is very great. The former has a certain brilliancy, demanded by the subject-matter, which is clever and conventional. The latter is laboured and unmusical. It possesses no other value than its political significance. The poet compares the sleep of a King—who is presumed to be necessarily a guilty person—with the horrid dreams of a convict shut up to brood over his fault:

> When from the dark synod, or blood-reeking field,
> To his chamber the monarch is led,
> All soothers of sense their soft virtue shall yield,
> And quietness pillow his head.

But the poor convict, through tumult and uproar, is denied even a brief forgetfulness of *his* crimes. The last stanza, as printed in "Lyrical Ballads," contained a humane expression which carries us back again to "Political Justice":

> At thy name though compassion her nature resign,
> Though in virtue's proud mouth thy report be a stain,
> My care, if the arm of the mighty were mine,
> Would plant thee where yet thou might'st blossom again.

M. Legouis remarks that in this "thoroughly Godwinian poem" Wordsworth dramatized "the philosopher's favourite idea for the reformation of the penal laws"—*i.e.*, transportation as a substitute for capital punishment. It is altogether to the credit both of Godwin and his disciple that they felt the folly and wickedness of the penal code in their time. And

* "L'Education de l'Amour," by the Vicomte de Ségur.

as Milton attained full stature as a poet only after twenty years of attention to public affairs, so we have no reason to regret that Wordsworth for a time gave himself to such questions, even if, as is not at all certain, he thereby delayed the expansion of his poetic powers.

"The Convict" was originally printed in *The Morning Post*, December 14, 1797, and this version shows very emphatically the poet's anti-monarchical principles, his philanthropic purpose, and a very creditable willingness to incur public censure at the bidding of conscience. As poetry, these verses are inferior to the touching lines entitled "The Dungeon," which Coleridge composed about the same time, and which contain the theme of Wordsworth's "Peter Bell."

RACEDOWN.

CHAPTER X

COLERIDGE

THE life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is hardly more remarkable for his genius than for the demonstrations of generosity which he evoked in other men. It would be unfair to insinuate that Cottle's practical advice and frequent loans were prompted solely by self-interest. If he took pains and even ran risks because he had faith in Coleridge's powers, one reason was that he "honoured verse." Although the natural differences of temperament between Coleridge and Southey, exasperated by their recent approximation, in having embarked upon the same mad project and married imprudently into the same family, had by 1796 resulted in coolness and dislike, Southey was still faithful to his ideal of Coleridge. One of the most satisfactory of these friendships, satisfactory because it gave equal delight and advantage to both parties and was preserved by a fine balance of mutual respect, was that between the poet and Thomas Poole. The story of their relations with each other has been charmingly recounted in Mrs. Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends," one of those biographies for which people who have passed the meridian of life forsake fiction without a sigh or a sense of loss.

Poole came to Coleridge's aid at a very critical moment. The scheme of emigration had fallen through. Southey had perceived how impracticable it was, and though his loyal nature compelled him to fulfil his engagement to Miss Edith Fricker, he had bidden her farewell at the church door after their marriage and had gone to Portugal. When he returned, in the summer of 1796, the project seemed to him wilder than ever. Nor did Lovell, who had married Mary

Fricker, care to revive it. Coleridge, who had married their sister Sara Fricker, perhaps as much out of Pantisocratic enthusiasm as for love, felt woefully deceived in the loss of his romantic hopes. He had nerved himself for a great adventure, of which only the first step had been taken, and that irretrievable. As a preacher and lecturer, he had not been very successful. He had not kept appointments with his audiences nor with his own soul. His friends tried to hold him to his dates, but no power on earth could make his pen catch up with his thoughts. A project for serving as tutor in a rich family near Derby had failed. His magazine, *The Watchman*, had come to an end after the tenth number, on May 13, 1796. His first child, Hartley, was born September 19. On the same day, however, he took up the intellectual guardianship of Charles Lloyd, a young poet, the son of a rich Quaker of Birmingham, who for nearly a year was to live with him constantly. But even with what he earned in this way and by occasional contributions to London newspapers, Coleridge was submerged in poverty. Cottle and other friends made occasional offerings, which were gratefully accepted. Superiority to trifles, either favourable or unfavourable, is a form of magnanimity, and the great soul of Coleridge shines almost unclouded in his poems written during this nerve-racking time. Not the least of his titles to our love is his entire freedom from the vanity of authorship. He, who had written the "Poems on Various Subjects," published by Cottle, in April, 1796, could be so self-forgetful as to append this note to the "Lines Written at Shurton Bars": "The expression 'green radiance' is borrowed from Mr. Wordsworth, a poet whose versification is occasionally harsh and his diction too frequently obscure; but whom I deem unrivalled among the writers of the present day in manly sentiment, novel imagery, and vivid colouring."

He desired to find a cottage in the country, where he could live more cheaply and with fewer interruptions than in Bristol, taking with him his wife and child

and his disciple Charles Lloyd. To his other troubles was now, towards the close of 1796, added, the demon Neuralgia. To combat this he unsuspectingly admitted a more terrible demon, Opium, and between the two his distraction was complete. For peace he turned to Thomas Poole. This young man, who was seven years his senior, lived in the village of Nether Stowey, about thirty miles from Bristol. One day in August, 1794, Poole had brought two strangers to call at the house of his uncle, who lived in the neighbouring hamlet of Upper Stowey. His cousin John, who was fresh from Oxford, and kept a diary in Latin, recorded his impressions, which Mrs. Sandford has thus translated:

"About one o'clock Thomas Poole and his brother Richard, Henry Poole, and two young men, friends of his, come in. These two strangers, I understand, had left Cambridge, and had walked nearly all through Wales. One is an undergraduate of Oxford, the other of Cambridge. Each of them is shamefully hot with Democratic rage as regards politics, and both Infidel as to religion. I was extremely indignant. At last, however, about two o'clock, they all go away. . . . About seven o'clock Mr. Reekes comes from Stowey. He is very indignant over the odious and detestable ill-feeling of those two young men, whom he had met at my Uncle Thomas's. They seemed to have shown their sentiments more plainly there than with us. But enough of such matters!"

The strangers, of course, were Southey and Coleridge.

The acquaintance soon ripened into friendship. Coleridge, perhaps in connection with his preaching in the Unitarian chapel at Bridgwater, visited Poole in September, 1795, as is thus recorded, in a diary kept by the latter's cousin Charlotte, under date of the 19th: "Tom Poole has a friend with him of the name of Coleridge: a young man of brilliant understanding, great eloquence, desperate fortune, democratick principles, and entirely led away by the feelings of the moment."

Three weeks later Poole wrote to Coleridge congratulating him on his marriage, and we see that he has

already assumed the tone of counsellor and comforter. On the very day the last *Watchman* came out, Poole transmitted to the penniless and discouraged poet a considerable sum of money which he had collected as a testimonial, and sent with it a beautiful letter. That they agreed in politics is shown by Coleridge's remark in a letter to Poole, March 30, 1796, now in the British Museum: "Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord is as contemptible in style as in matter—it is sad stuff."

To Poole, then, Coleridge naturally turned at the end of the year, when illness and bad fortune drove him to seek another home. Poole, with proper caution, described the disadvantages of Nether Stowey and the cottage there on which Coleridge had set his heart; but the latter broke into such transports of despair that nothing more could be urged, and before January 1, 1797, he was settled, uncomfortably enough, in a mean little house beside the village street. Nether Stowey lies on the north-eastern slope of the Quantock Hills, eight or ten miles back from the Bristol Channel, and may have to-day a population of six or seven hundred. In Thomas Poole's time it was smaller. It is built in the form of the letter **Y**. Poole's house, which was one of the largest in the place, faced the left-hand street, which leads into the hills towards Upper Stowey. Its garden ran back almost to the garden of the Coleridge cottage, which faced the other branch. According to the poet's estimates, the accuracy of which my own observation leads me to doubt, he had an acre and a half of ground behind his cottage, where, before he had been in the place three weeks, and in the depth of winter, he wrote: "I raise potatoes and all manner of vegetables; have an orchard, and shall raise corn (with the spade) enough for my family. We have two pigs, and ducks and geese. A cow would not answer to keep; for we have whatever milk we want from T. Poole." Not even the memorial tablet which now dignifies the little house can make it other than very plain. It stands elbow to elbow with other plain little houses.

According to Mrs. Sandford, "in Coleridge's time it would seem to have consisted of two small and rather dark little parlours, one on each side of the front door, looking straight into the street, and a small kitchen behind, wholly destitute of modern conveniences, and where the fire was made on the hearth in the most primitive manner conceivable. There cannot have been more than three or, at most, four bedrooms above." But if his own quarters were cramped, Coleridge had an escape into the more spacious property of Poole, who had room enough and a well-chosen library. Nor was there a bigger heart in the world than Poole's. Poetry and politics were his intellectual passions. He had taught himself and had made others teach him Latin and French. He had reserved four or five hours of his busy day for reading.

Poole took a lively interest in the Revolution. His cousin Charlotte wrote of him in her diary: "I wish he would cease to torment us with his democratick sentiments; but he is never happy until the subject of politicks is introduced, and, as we all differ so much from him, we wish to have no conversation about it." He suffered some petty persecution for giving a copy of "The Rights of Man" to a cabinet-maker, and prevented the excited people of Stowey from burning Tom Paine in effigy. For some years he cherished the hope of making a journey of observation through the Western republic, and he treasured a lock of George Washington's hair which an American friend had given him. He wore his own hair without powder, as a sign of protest against the war-tax on that commodity. Although he inherited considerable property, including a tan-yard, he spent some time as a journeyman tanner on the outskirts of London learning the mechanical details of his trade. He was an embodiment of practical good sense combined with theoretical ability. He wrote the article on Tanning for the third edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," introduced improved machinery, managed most of the public and philanthropic affairs of his neighbourhood, fought the slave-

trade, helped to support Coleridge, and was the centre of the distinguished group who made the obscure hamlet of Nether Stowey for a time the intellectual capital of England. All these interests, too, he kept up without detriment to the energetic handling of a large private business.

Coleridge spent the first six months of 1797 at Nether Stowey revising his "Poems" for a second edition and writing his tragedy "Osorio." Charles Lloyd was intelligent, attractive, and devoted to his instructor, but extremely delicate. There was little gardening, after all. On Sundays Coleridge often walked to Bridgwater, eight miles away, or to Taunton, somewhat farther, to preach to the Unitarian congregations there. This sojourn was one of his few green isles "in the deep wide sea of misery." The outdoor life was good for his health. Poole's friendship comforted his soul. There was no immediate cause for alarm as to the hostile league of those "two giants, BREAD and CHEESE." His poetic vein was proving very rich. And best of all, he was getting out the ore. Altogether, we may treat ourselves to the thought that it was a right happy young man who, leaping over the gate at Racedown, ran across the triangular field to salute his brother poet. It is always a pleasure to think of Coleridge happy. And his best days henceforth are those spent in the society of William and Dorothy Wordsworth.

He no doubt gave them a most enthusiastic account of Nether Stowey. Poole, as we know, was built according to Wordsworth's ideal, an example of what an English farmer and artisan could become. His attainments, Wordsworth thought, were, in kind at least, not beyond the reach of the better sort of Westmorland and Cumberland "statesmen." Coleridge, of course, described Poole. Probably, too, he dilated on the superior beauty of the scenery in Somerset. And it is true that the hills about Racedown are bleak compared with the richly-wooded heights and combes of the Quantocks, the landscape less open and cheerful, the general air of nature less warm and opulent. But more attractive than all his descriptions, there was Coleridge himself. Words-

worth had not hitherto been appreciated; Coleridge caught, interpreted, and approved his every expression. Wordsworth was still in rebellion against Church and State, and had been perhaps wondering in his seclusion whether, after all, there were any other young men quite so extreme as himself. Coleridge made no concealment of his own radical views, which he no doubt clothed with splendour and paraded with pomp. They were both Cambridge men, both poets—though undiscovered by a senseless world—and both writing tragedies. In Dorothy's heart the subtle instincts of pity and womanly solicitude were stirred. She penetrated their guest's disguise, and behind his gay and fluent speech detected his unrest, his anxiety, his self-reproach. At that moment began the long years wherein her first thought, next to William's welfare, ever was how to alleviate Coleridge's suffering.

Nether Stowey is well over thirty miles from Racedown by the roads existing at that time. Yet, having tasted the joys of companionship with the Wordsworths, Coleridge thought nothing of flying back to sip the nectar again and again, and in a letter to Southey written in July, 1797, he says: "I had been on a visit to Wordsworth's at Racedown, near Crewkerne, and I brought him and his sister back with me, and here I have *settled them*." It is not unlikely that between June 16 and July 2, Wordsworth walked over with Coleridge from Racedown, was captivated by the beauty of the Quantocks, and learned that a good house could be rented on extremely easy terms not far from Coleridge, to whom by this time he was already deeply attached. At any rate, he and his sister came to Nether Stowey on July 2, 1797, apparently with no intention of returning to Dorsetshire.

On this occasion Coleridge drove and Dorothy sat beside him. No doubt they brought the few articles which constituted the Wordsworths' slight *impedimenta*, and of course five-year-old Basil. Coleridge referred to this exploit as proof of his ability to drive a one-horse chaise. The roads, he told Southey, were execrable.

This journey was a fitting close to a month of intermittent and enthusiastic talk, of thrilling discoveries, of frank disclosures. Their acquaintance ripened quickly into a relation for which even "friendship" is too cold a word. The anxieties, the sorrows of Dorothy Wordsworth's life, and perhaps, too, her intensest joys, dated from that happy time. "My sister," he calls her after that, and she was brave enough to remain on that footing through the years to come. We have seen how unrestrained she was in expressing her love for William. To this other love she grants no stronger phrase than "dear Col." Not until her mind gave way beneath the load of sympathy and suppressed emotion, and the light of her glad youth darkened down to premature old age, did those about her half understand. "Her health broken by long walks," indeed! Why keep up this fiction, when the truth but testifies to the fulness of her womanly nature and adds a crowning touch to the beauty of her character? She loved Coleridge, and was able, through long years, not of mere silence and withdrawal, but of close intimacy, to transmute her love into helpfulness, forgetting self and reverencing every obligation. Did she perchance strengthen her soul, in moments of extreme trial, with Godwin's law that "man has no rights, but only duties"? The story of Dorothy Wordsworth is the tenderest, the purest, the most sacred page in the annals of poetry. "She never told her love," but her sweet innocency never taught her to practise concealment of it; so that even those who knew her well were deceived by her frankness into a belief that she really felt towards Coleridge only a sisterly solicitude and the affection of an old comrade.

The Wordsworths, not to mention Basil—whom at this juncture nobody mentions—appear to have been crowded somehow into that little house in Nether Stowey, with Coleridge and Mrs. Coleridge, and Hartley the baby, and Nanny the maid ("simple of heart, physiognomically handsome, and scientific in vaccimulgence"), and to have stayed there the two weeks beginning with July 2. Coleridge writes to Cottle:

"Stowey, 1797.

"Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed! in mind, I mean, and heart; for her person is such, that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty! but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion, her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw would say,

Guilt was a thing impossible in her.

Her information various. Her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature; and her taste, a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties and most recondite faults. She and W. desire their kindest regards to you.—Your ever affectionate friend, S. T. C."

As if it were not an amazing enough coincidence that three persons of genius should be sheltered under one mean roof, who should arrive from London but Charles Lamb! Lloyd, be it observed, had had several attacks of melancholia, and was no longer living at Nether Stowey. It was less than a year since the terrible day when Lamb's dear sister Mary, in a fit of insanity, killed her mother, September 22, 1796. Coleridge had for some time been trying to persuade his old schoolfellow to visit him, and, apparently without knowing that the Wordsworths were there, Lamb at last consented to come to Nether Stowey. He arrived on July 7, and stayed until the 14th. In the letter to Southey already cited, Coleridge writes:

"Charles Lamb has been with me for a week. He left me Friday morning. The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb's stay, and still prevents me from all *walks* longer than a furlong. While Wordsworth, his sister, and Charles Lamb were out one evening, sitting in the arbour of T. Poole's garden, which communicates with mine, I composed these lines, with which I am pleased."

Here he inserts the earliest extant and no doubt original draft of his delightful poem, "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison," one of the sweetest and most tranquil of his compositions. Twice in these lines appears the expression, "my Sister and my Friends." In a copy which he wrote for Lloyd, who had not met the Wordsworths, and could better picture the scene without them, he changed this to "my Sara and my friend," and in the printed version, which he prepared after his sad estrangement from Wordsworth, he altered it to "my gentle-hearted Charles." In the prefatory note, beginning "In the June of 1797 some long-expected friends paid a visit to the author's cottage," he named the month incorrectly.

It was an extraordinary company that strolled back and forth between Poole's house and the cottage, and climbed up to the ancient British camp, above the village, and wandered through the wooded hills. Country people meeting them stared at their unconventional clothing, and commented on their apparent idleness. Coleridge himself was hardly yet an accepted figure, and all Tom Poole's old radicalism was remembered afresh. Even Mrs. Coleridge was not like other women. We think of her too exclusively as a careworn mother, much concerned with household economy, and are inclined to forget that she married with the expectation of becoming a Pantisocrat and leading a very different sort of life from most women. Moreover, she too wrote verses. The other three were extraordinary-looking persons. William was tall and gaunt, with a peculiar nervous smile that played about the corners of his mouth. He wore his hair long, straight, and unpowdered, like a Jacobin. Charles Lamb was only twenty-two, and delighted in mystifying people. He and Dorothy, with their dark skin and roving eyes, had a foreign air. They looked enough alike to be members of the same gipsy band.

It is probable that they all, in spite of Coleridge's scalded foot, managed to inspect the property which it was planned that Wordsworth should rent. Lamb

reproached himself with being a rather silent guest. There was much talk, and Coleridge, beyond question, did his share; but Lamb can hardly have deserved his own censure. They were entertained at Poole's, and one or two other houses. On his return to London, Lamb wrote to his host:

"I feel improvement in the recollection of many a casual conversation. The names of Tom Poole, of Wordsworth and his good Sister, with thine and Sara's, are become 'familiar in my mouth as household words.' You would make me very happy, if you think W. has no objection, by transcribing for me that inscription of his. I have some scattered sentences ever floating on my memory, teasing me that I cannot remember more of it."

This must refer to the "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree."

A pretty clear trace of these conversations remains in a few sentences of that letter from Coleridge to Southey which I have already quoted, and which was written just after Lamb's departure, and we can see in them the print of Wordsworth's mind. They are perhaps the earliest witnesses to that understanding between Wordsworth and Coleridge on the subject of poetic diction which resulted in "Lyrical Ballads," and the critical works growing out of that venture.

"A young man," he writes, "by strong feelings is impelled to write on a particular subject, and this is all his feelings do for him. They set him upon the business and then they leave him. He has such a high idea of what poetry ought to be, that he cannot conceive that such things as his natural emotions may be allowed to find a place in it; his learning therefore, his fancy, or rather conceit, and all his powers of buckram are put on the stretch."

It must have been Wordsworth's natural gifts that won Coleridge's admiration; certainly not his learning. The plastic mind of Coleridge respected his guest's superior power of self-determination, and above all, perhaps, the quality of spirit which made him regard

his natural emotions with so much reverence that to dress them in buckram would have been impossible. "Wordsworth is a very great man," wrote Coleridge to Southey in this same letter; "the only man to whom *at all times* and *in all modes of excellence* I feel myself inferior."

Alfoxden is a long, low, and very beautiful country-house, about four miles north-west of Nether Stowey. It is surrounded by a romantic park, heavily wooded with noble oaks and beeches, which extends far back into the Quantock Hills. The road from Bridgwater and Stowey passes below the house at the foot of a broad lawn to the little village of Holford. The brown waters of the Bristol Channel bound the view on the north-east. After the plainness of Nether Stowey, and the strictly agricultural character of all the country which a traveller from Bridgwater sees from the road, Alfoxden has a somewhat grand, though genial air. It is much larger than Rydal Mount. Miss Wordsworth was not exaggerating when she called it a mansion. Seventy head of deer fed in the glades around it, and their descendants give life to the park now. The place has a warm and open look, very different from that of Racedown. But it has been described by an inimitable pen. Miss Wordsworth and her brother found their way into the park before they had been two days at Nether Stowey, and she wrote on July 4:

"There is everything there; sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cunberland, villages so romantic; and William and I, in a vander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell formed by steep hills covered with full-grovn timber-trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lovther, and the country more romantic; it has the character of the less grand parts of the neighbourhood of the akes."

On August 14, writing now from Alfoxden itself, she says:

"The evening that I wrote to you, Willian and I had rambled as far as this house, and pryed into the recesses of our little brook, but without any more fixed thoughts

upon it than some dreams of happiness in a little cottage and passing wishes that such a place might be found out. We spent a fortnight at Coleridge's: in the course of that time we heard that this house was to let, applied for it, and took it. Our principal inducement was Coleridge's society. It was a month yesterday since we came to Alfoxden.

"The house is a large mansion, with furniture enough for a dozen families like ours. There is a very excellent garden, well stocked with vegetables and fruit. The garden is at the end of the house, and our favourite parlour, as at Racedown, looks that way. In front is a little court, with grass plot, gravel walk, and shrubs; the moss roses were in full beauty a month ago. The front of the house is to the south, but it is screened from the sun by a high hill which rises immediately from it. This hill is beautiful, scattered irregularly and abundantly with trees, and topped with fern, which spreads a considerable way down it. The deer dwell here, and sheep, so that we have a living prospect. From the end of the house we have a view of the sea, over a woody meadow-country; and exactly opposite the window where I now sit is an immense wood, whose round top from this point has exactly the appearance of a mighty dome. In some parts of this wood there is an under grove of hollies which are now very beautiful. In a glen at the bottom of the wood is the waterfall of which I spoke, a quarter of a mile from the house. We are three miles from Stowey, and not two miles from the sea. Wherever we turn we have woods, smooth downs, and valleys with small brooks running down them, through green meadows, hardly ever intercepted with hedgerows, but scattered over with trees. The hills that cradle these valleys are either covered with fern and bilberries or oak woods, which are cut for charcoal. . . . Walks extend for miles over the hill-tops; the great beauty of which is their wild simplicity: they are perfectly smooth, without rocks. The Tor of Glastonbury is before our eyes during more than half of our walk to Stowey; and in the park wherever we go, keeping about fifteen yards above the house, it makes a part of our prospect."

Alfoxden belonged to a family named St. Albyn. A lease of the property, including house, furniture, gardens, stables, and coach-house, was signed July 14 by their

tenant, John Bartholomew, and William Wordsworth, and witnessed by Thomas Poole, the rental being only twenty-three pounds, for one year, Bartholomew to pay all rates and taxes, and keep the premises in good tenantable repair. This merely nominal price was due to the fact that the sole object of letting the place at all was to keep the house inhabited during the owner's minority. It may be remarked also that the war had seriously checked the prosperity of the country, and many great families were glad to get anything for their country-seats.

From the letters just quoted, it might seem that when the Wordsworths came to visit Coleridge, they did not dream of renting Alfoxden; yet they appear to have come away from Racedown with bag and baggage, for they took possession of their new place at once. When Miss Wordsworth wrote, "It was a month yesterday since we came to Alfoxden," she probably meant four weeks, which would be July 16. Lamb left Nether Stowey July 14. Poole, of course, was active in securing Alfoxden for Wordsworth. It was probably in the interval between July 14 and 17 that Coleridge wrote to Poole: "I pray you come over if possible by eleven o'clock that we may have Wordsworth's Tragedy read under the trees."

Immediately after Lamb's departure he was succeeded at Nether Stowey by another invited guest. This was John Thelwall, the political agitator, with whom Coleridge had for some months been in frequent correspondence. Coming to Coleridge's house late on July 17, he found that his host was spending the night at Alfoxden. The necessity of "superintending the wash-tub" had brought Mrs. Coleridge home, but next morning she and Thelwall hastened over to Alfoxden, four miles away, in time, as we are told, "to call Samuel and his friend Wordsworth up to breakfast."* Thus began a day which must have remained bright in Thelwall's memory for ever. "We are a most philosophical

* Letter from Thelwall to his wife, dated Alfoxden, July 18, 1797. See Mrs. Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends," I. 232.

party," he declared, "the enthusiastic group consisting of C. and his Sara, W. and his sister, and myself, without any servant, male or female." They rambled through the grounds, exploring its woods and its romantic dell. They "passed sentence on the productions and characters of the age," and gave full vent to their enthusiasm in poetical and philosophic flights. "Citizen John," cried Coleridge, as they gazed at the water tumbling in its dim recess, "this is a fine place to talk treason in." "Nay! Citizen Samuel," rejoined the tired fighter, "it is rather a place to make a man forget that there is any necessity for treason."*

Though this appears to have been their first meeting, Coleridge and Thelwall had been in correspondence for over a year. In December, 1796, Coleridge had written: "Though *personally* unknown, I really love you, and can count but few human beings whose hand I would welcome with a more hearty grasp of friendship." There is in the British Museum a letter from Thelwall to Coleridge, May 10, 1796, mentioning previous correspondence between them, and referring to a sonnet by Coleridge in Thelwall's honour, containing the words: "Thou, mid thickest fire, Leap'st on the perilous wall." The person thus esteemed by Coleridge was about eight years his senior, a self-made man, who during a youth of poverty, in which he tried several occupations, never ceased to read and to practise composition. He was deeply affected by the French Revolution. He perceived its social significance. As M. Charles Cestre has well said:† "He played a prominent part in the

* Coleridge's "Table Talk," July 26, 1830. Wordsworth's version of this little incident, as recorded in the Fenwick note to his "Anecdote for Fathers," is characteristic of the way in which, in the latter part of his life, he made light of his early connection with radicals like Thelwall: "I remember once when Coleridge, he, and I were seated together upon the turf, on the brink of a stream in the most beautiful part of the most beautiful glen of Alfoxden, Coleridge exclaimed: 'This is a place to reconcile one to all the jarrings and conflicts of the wide world.' 'Nay,' said Thelwall, 'to make one forget them altogether.'" Who can doubt that Coleridge has reported the words correctly?

† "John Thelwall: a Pioneer of Democracy and Social Reform in England during the French Revolution," p. 13. London, 1906.

first democratic agitation in England, gained great ascendancy over the more educated elements of the labouring class, and cannot but have been powerfully instrumental in awakening the lower orders to the consciousness of their opportunities."

In the height of the reactionary panic in May, 1794, Thelwall was arrested, his house was searched, his library was taken from him and never restored, his writings were scattered, and he was committed to await trial on the flimsiest of testimony.*

He lay for five months untried in the Tower, and for one month in Newgate prison, "in the dead-hole, or charnel-house, where the corpses of such prisoners as died of diseases were placed before the burial."

In spite of the desperate and contemptible measures taken by Government to procure conviction, Thelwall was acquitted of the charge of high treason. His sufferings only increased his zeal, and on his release, as he was not allowed to speak in public places, he fitted up a lecture-room of his own, where he spoke twice a week to large audiences, expounding the philosophy of the Revolution, and pleading such causes as electoral reform and liberty of assembly. He published his lectures in a periodical, *The Tribune*, which he owned and edited. After the great mass-meeting of December 7, 1795, in Marylebone Fields, the Government renewed its pressure, his supporters fell away, and he was obliged to give up lecturing. *The Tribune* was suppressed in April, 1796, but Thelwall continued publishing his doctrines in pamphlets until the close of the year. He earned a precarious living, and managed to continue his political propaganda, by lecturing in many parts of the country on subjects not immediately revolutionary, such as

* Thelwall says: "Every manuscript was seized, upon whatever subject—Poems, Novels, Dramas, Literary and Philosophical Dissertations—all the unfinished labours of ten years' application. Successful or abrotive, it matters not; they were the fruits, the creations of my own industry, and therefore were more *absolutely my property* than the estate of the landed gentleman or the stock-in-trade of the manufacturer. Whether they are worth *sixpence* or *six thousand pounds* is of no consequence." See Vol. I., p. 90, of *The Tribune*, London, 1795.

Roman history. But his activities became more and more difficult and unprofitable as the rising war-passion swept men and parties into the Tory ranks. He was frequently mobbed, and the magistrates of some of the towns where he spoke refused to give him protection. He had few friends left except Coleridge. He was attracted to the latter not only personally, but for the rather amusing reason that he conceived of him as one who had found a way to combine intellectual freedom with agricultural success. Coleridge, on the other hand, was interested in Thelwall, not only as a talented and brave revolutionist, but as an atheist, who might be converted to more moderate religious views.

Coleridge charged his correspondent with "anti-religious bigotry." To a man of his argumentative disposition, the task of converting such a person was very alluring. He himself could so easily see many sides to all great philosophical questions, that the simple dogmatic Thelwall must have seemed to him a mere child. He had not found it easy to alter the mood of his other new-found friend, Wordsworth, whom he termed "a semi-atheist." He was proud of having won Charles Lloyd "to a conviction of the truth of Christianity, . . . for he had been, if not a deist, yet quite a sceptic." The half-dozen letters in which he poured out his heart to Thelwall before meeting him are among the liveliest and most affectionate Coleridge ever wrote. Small wonder that the persecuted and discouraged agitator sought at last to enjoy his presence and see if there was any chance of settling in his neighbourhood.

The world has long ago forgotten, if it ever indeed admitted, that Thelwall was a poet. Yet he was the author of much verse. Its quality is below mediocrity; but the subjects he chose and the nature of his attempt are not without significance to a student of Wordsworth. The plan of Thelwall's "Peripatetic" is similar in its mechanism to that of "The Excursion," and it is perhaps not too fanciful to think that in "Michael" we have a reminiscence of Thelwall's poem, "On Leaving

the Bottoms of Gloucestershire, August, 1797," in which he thus describes the cottages of weavers:

> Industry,
> Even from the dawning to the western ray,
> And oft by midnight taper, patient plies
> Her task assiduous; and the day with songs,
> The night with many an earth-star, far descried,
> By the lone traveller, cheers amid her toil.

Thelwall and Wordsworth agreed perfectly in their opposition to war and their belief that the poor of England were oppressed. Thelwall was one of the first observers to sound a warning against the dangers of the industrial movement just beginning, which tended to attract the population into large centres and to exploit children's labour. He raised his voice against

> the unwieldy pride
> Of Factory overgrown, when Opulence,
> Dispeopling the neat cottage, crowds his walls
> (Made pestilent by congregated lungs
> And lewd association) with a race
> Of infant slaves, brok'n timely to the yoke
> Of unremitting drudgery.

All that rendered Thelwall interesting to Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Thomas Poole, made him an object of horror to other people in the Stowey neighbourhood. Poole's cousin Charlotte wrote in her diary:

"*July* 23, 1797.—We are shocked to hear that Mr. Thelwall has spent some time at Stowey this week with Mr. Coleridge, and consequently with Tom Poole. Alfoxton House is taken by one of the fraternity, and Woodlands by another. To what are we coming?"

The chief offender had left Nether Stowey by July 27, for on that date, being his birthday, he wrote some verses at the neighbouring town of Bridgwater. They were composed, as their title informs us, "during a long Excursion in quest of a peaceful Retreat," and contain a pathetic expression of hope that the recent pleasant days may sometime be renewed:

Ah ! 'twould be sweet, beneath the neighb'ring thatch,
In philosophic amity to dwell,
Inditing moral verse, or tale, or theme,
Gay or instructive; and it would be sweet
With kindly interchange of mutual aid
To delve our little garden plots, the while
Sweet converse flow'd, suspending oft the arm
And half-driven spade, while, eager, one propounds,
And listens one, weighing each pregnant word,
And pondering fit reply, that may untwist
The knotty point—perchance, of import high—
Of moral Truth, of Causes infinite,
Created Power, or uncreated Worlds
Eternal and uncaus'd ! or whatsoe'er
Of Metaphysic, or of Ethic Lore,
The Mind, with curious subtlety, pursues—
Agreeing or dissenting—sweet alike,
When wisdom, and not Victory, the end. . . .

There is a letter from Coleridge to John Chubb, of Bridgwater, written in 1797 or 1798, on the subject of Thelwall's difficulty in finding a place where he could live unmolested. Mr. Chubb, who appears to have been an estate-agent, is urged to find a cottage for Thelwall somewhere within five or six miles of Stowey.

"He has found by experience," writes the sympathetic poet, "that neither his own health or that of his wife and children can be preserved in London; and were it otherwise, yet his income is inadequate to maintain him there. He is therefore under the necessity of fixing his residence in the country. But, by his particular exertions in the propagation of those principles which we hold sacred and of the highest importance, he has become, as you well know, particularly unpopular, through every part of the kingdom—in every part of the kingdom, therefore, some odium and inconvenience must be incurred by those who should be instrumental in procuring him a cottage there—but are Truth and Liberty of so little importance that we owe no sacrifice to them ?"

Thelwall desired to take a house at Nether Stowey, and settle there permanently with his wife and children, but Coleridge, in the autumn, warned him not to come. Without Poole's help it would be impossible, he says, and "to such interference on his part there are insuper-

able difficulties." "The whole malignity of the Aristocrats," he continues, "will converge to him, as to one point. His tranquillity will be perpetually interrupted; his business and his credit hampered and distressed by vexatious calumnies; the ties of relationship weakened, perhaps broken; and, lastly, his poor old mother made miserable." Then from what follows we have the information that Wordsworth at the time of his coming had been regarded as a dangerous man:

"Very great odium Tom Poole incurred by bringing *me* here; my peaceable manners, and known attachment to Christianity, had almost worn it away, when Wordsworth came, and he, likewise by T. Poole's agency, settled here. You cannot conceive the tumult, calumnies, and apparatus of threatened persecutions, which the event has occasioned round about us. If *you*, too, should come, I am afraid that even riots, and dangerous riots, might be the consequence. Either of us separately would perhaps be tolerated; but *all three* together —what can it be less than plot and damned conspiracy? —a school for the propagation of Demagogy and Atheism?"

In another letter, of about the same time, he says:

"I am sad at heart about you on many accounts, but chiefly anxious for this present business. The aristocrats seem to persecute *even Wordsworth*. But we will at least not yield without a struggle; and if I cannot get you near me, it shall not be for want of a trial on my part."

We have here a reference to a fact which gives one some idea of the state of the public mind. Coleridge, unsupported by other testimony, might be suspected of exaggerating very mild alarms into something more considerable. But it is known that someone in the neighbourhood sent word to the authorities that disaffected persons were gathering about Nether Stowey, and a Government spy was sent down to observe them. Mrs. St. Albyn, the mother of the heir to Alfoxden, was invoked to look into Wordsworth's case. She reprimanded her tenant or agent, Bartholomew, for having let the house to him, and notice was given the poet to

quit the place on the expiration of his term, which would be the next June. Poole, who had to bear the responsibility, shouldered his part of the blame right manfully, and wrote a letter of explanation to the incensed "aristocrat," but in vain. The important parts of his letter to Mrs. St. Albyn are as follows:

"MADAM,—I have heard that Mr. Bartholomew of Putsham has incurred your displeasure by letting Allfoxen House to Mr. Wordsworth. As it was through me that Mr. Wordsworth was introduced to Mr. Bartholomew as a tenant, I take the liberty of addressing to you this letter, simply to state the circumstances attending the business, and to say a few words for Mr. Wordsworth and his connections. . . . As for Mr. Wordsworth, I believe him to be in every respect a gentleman. I have not known him personally long, but I had heard of his family before I knew him. Dr. Fisher, our late Vicar, and one of the Canons of Windsor, had often mentioned to me, as his particular and respected friend, Mr. Cookson, Mr. Wordsworth's uncle, and also one of the Canons of Windsor. This circumstance was sufficient to convince me of the respectability of Mr. Wordsworth's family. You may, upon my honour, rest assured that no tenant could have been found for Allfoxen whom, if you knew him, you would prefer to Mr. Wordsworth. His family is small, consisting of his sister, who has principally lived with her uncle, Mr. Cookson, a child of five years old, the son of a friend of his, and one excellent female servant. . . . But I am informed you have heard that Mr. Wordsworth does keep company, and on this head I fear the most infamous falsehoods have reached your ears. Mr. Wordsworth is a man fond of retirement—fond of reading and writing—and has never had above two gentlemen at a time with him. By accident Mr. Thelwall, as he was travelling through the neighbourhood, called at Stowey. The person he called on at Stowey took him to Allfoxen. No person at Stowey nor Mr. Wordsworth knew of his coming. Mr. Wordsworth had never spoken to him before, nor, indeed, had anyone of Stowey. Surely the common duties of hospitality were not to be refused to any man: and who would not be interested in seeing such a man as Thelwall, however they may disapprove of his sentiments or conduct? God knows we are all liable to err,

and should bear with patience the difference in one another's opinions. Be assured, and I speak it from my own knowledge, that Mr. Wordsworth, of all men alive, is the last who will give anyone cause to complain of his opinions, his conduct, or his disturbing the peace of anyone. Let me beg you, madam, to hearken to no calumnies, no party spirit, nor to join with any in disturbing one who only wishes to live in tranquillity. I will pledge myself in every respect that you will have no cause to complain of Mr. Wordsworth. You have known me from my youth, and know my family—I should not risk my credit with you in saying what I could not answer for.—Believe me, with sincere respect, your very obedient and obliged—THOMAS POOLE.

"*September* 16, 1797."*

Mrs. Sandford tells a curious anecdote about Poole's cousins at Upper Stowey:

"Once Tom Poole, being there with his friends, begged Penelope to sing 'Come, ever-smiling Liberty!' ('Judas Maccabæus') for Coleridge and Wordsworth. Many years afterwards she related the circumstance to her daughter, and told how she persistently selected another song. 'I could not sing it,' she said; 'I knew what they meant by *their* liberty.'"

A spy could hardly have come into this extremely patriotic neighbourhood without his business being discovered, and there can be no doubt that a spy came to observe the friends. Probably much wise advice was offered in this case by ignorant villagers puzzled by the unconventional dress and manner of the strangers, and by officious persons who felt that they owed it to the country to see that no Jacobins were tolerated in Somerset. These petty persecutions, and especially the descent and discomfiture of the spy, must have amused the two poets, and added a delightful spice of romance to their daily walks. We must remember how young they were. Coleridge could not refrain from telling the story with

* The rough draft of this letter is in the British Museum, and shows by its many erasures and corrections that Poole felt he was undertaking a very delicate mission.

mock-solemn detail, in the midst of a very serious part of "Biographia Literaria."

Wordsworth, in the Fenwick note to "Anecdote for Fathers," after referring rather apologetically to his acquaintance with Thelwall, says: "The visit of this man to Coleridge was, as I believe Coleridge has related, the occasion of a spy being sent by Government to watch our proceedings, which were, I can say with truth, such as the world at large would have thought ludicrously harmless." He gave to the composition of this poem the date 1798, and told Miss Fenwick,

"the name of Liswyn Farm was taken from a beautiful spot on the Wye,* where Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and I, had been visiting the famous John Thelwall, who had taken refuge from politics, after a trial for high treason, with a view to bring up his family by the profits of agriculture, which proved as unfortunate a speculation as that he had fled from. Coleridge and he had both been public lecturers; Coleridge mingling with his politics Theology, from which the other elocutionist abstained, unless it was for the sake of a sneer. This quondam community of public employment induced Thelwall to visit Coleridge at Nether Stowey, where he fell in my way. He really was a man of extraordinary talent, an affectionate husband, and a good father. Though brought up in the city, on a tailor's board, he was truly sensible of the beauty of natural objects."

It is likely that Wordsworth's attitude toward Thelwall in 1797 was by no means so detached and superior as he wished to make it appear when he dictated this sadly inaccurate and condescending note. Coleridge, writing to a friend, says: "John Thelwall is a very warm-hearted, honest man; and disagreeing as we do, on almost every point of religion, of morals, of politics, and philosophy, we like each other uncommonly well. He is a great favourite with Sara."

A letter from Coleridge to Cottle, undated, but evidently written in the spring or early summer of 1798,

* Apparently he had forgotten that Thelwall's farm was not on the Wye, but near Brecon, in Wales, a day's walk from the Wye.

shows in the following passage that the distrust of Wordsworth continued throughout the entire time of his residence in Somersetshire, and that Mrs. St. Albyn did not relent:

"Wordsworth has been caballed against *so long and so loudly* that he has found it impossible to prevail on the tenant of the Allfoxden estate, to let him keep the house, after their first agreement is expired, so he must quit it at Midsummer; whether we shall be able to procure him a house and furniture near Stowey, we know not, and yet we must: for the hills, and the woods, and the streams, and the sea, and the shores, would break forth into reproaches against us, if we did not strain every nerve, to keep their Poet among them. Without joking, and in serious sadness, Poole and I cannot endure to think of losing him."*

Cottle treats us to an anecdote which from its flavour evidently passed through the hands of Coleridge: "The wiseacres of the village had, it seems, made Mr. W. the subject of their serious conversation. One said that 'he had seen him wander about by night, and look rather strangely at the moon! and then he roamed over the hills, like a partridge.' Another said, 'he had heard him mutter, as he walked, in some outlandish brogue, that nobody could understand!'" But here I am afraid the amiable Cottle becomes too garrulous to be quoted further. True or not, however, his account of how he and the poets tried to unharness a horse is worth repeating for two reasons: it is no exaggeration of their ignorance of worldly ways, and it shows how

* Knight makes the statement ("Life of Wordsworth," I. 146) that the poet wrote on the margin of a memoir of himself, compiled by Barron Field, and never printed, opposite a statement that his removal from Alfoxden was occasioned by "caballing long and loud": "A mistake. *Not the occasion* of my removal. Annoyances I had none. The facts mentioned by Coleridge of a spy, etc., came not to my knowledge till I had left the neighbourhood. I was not refused a continuance. I never applied for one." I have not seen the memoir to which Knight here refers. Certainly Wordsworth's recollection was at fault, as the letters and extracts given above from diaries in Mrs. Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends" show, not to mention the testimony of Cottle, Coleridge, and Southey, and the manuscript of the draft of Poole's letter to Mrs. St. Albyn, which I have seen.

eager the author of "Alfred, an Epic Poem in Twenty-four Books," was to associate his name with the authors of the "Ancient Mariner" and "The Excursion":

"I removed the harness without difficulty, but, after many strenuous attempts, I could not get off the collar. In despair, I called for assistance, when aid soon drew near. Mr. W. first brought his ingenuity into exercise, but, after several unsuccessful efforts, he relinquished the achievement, as altogether impracticable. Mr. Coleridge now tried his hand, but showed no more grooming skill than his predecessors; for after twisting the poor horse's neck, almost to strangulation, and to the great danger of his eyes, he gave up the useless task, pronouncing that 'the horse's head must have grown (gout or dropsy!) since the collar was put on! for,' he said, 'it was a downright impossibility for such a huge Os Frontis to pass through so narrow a collar!' Just at this instant the servant girl came near, and understanding the cause of our consternation, 'La, Master,' said she, 'you do not go about the work in the right way. You should do like this,' when, turning the collar completely upside down, she slipped it off in a moment, to our great humiliation and wonderment; each satisfied, afresh, that there were heights of knowledge in the world to which he had not attained."

CHAPTER XI

THREE PERSONS AND ONE SOUL

Coleridge was immensely benefited in spirits by Wordsworth's companionship, though he wrote to Cottle that in spite of his friend's conversation he was depressed, for he saw no way of earning Bread and Cheese. The nectar of sympathy and the ambrosia of discourse seem to have taken the place of these humble elements, for we hear little more of them, the mundane inference being that they were unobtrusively provided by Poole. At once the brief but fervent Polar summer of Coleridge's poetic activity began. The bracing effect of Wordsworth's society is seen first in the consecutive toil which Coleridge bestowed upon his "Osorio," which probably represents more hard work than anything else he ever wrote. Sheridan had asked him to write a tragedy. The knowledge that Wordsworth was writing one encouraged him. Such progress was made that by September he had reached the middle of the fifth act, and a month later it was finished and sent to the Drury Lane Theatre. It was rejected. In 1813, in a revised form and with a new title, "Remorse," it was successfully performed, and had a long run in London, besides being acted in the provinces.

Wordsworth was not much later than Coleridge in finishing his tragedy. The latter wrote to Cottle:

"I have procured for Wordsworth's tragedy an introduction to Harris, the manager of Covent Garden, who has promised to read it attentively and to give his answer immediately; and if he accepts it, to put it in preparation without an hour's delay."

And on November 20 Dorothy Wordsworth writes:

"William's play is finished, and sent to the managers of the Covent Garden Theatre. We have not the faintest expectation that it will be accepted."

But undoubtedly they had some hopes, for they went to London, about the end of the month, and stayed three weeks. She wrote from Bristol, on the return journey, December 21:

"We have been in London: our business was the play; and the play is rejected. It was sent to one of the principal actors at Covent Garden, who expressed great approbation, and advised William strongly to go to London to make certain alterations."

The same letter expresses great sorrow and disappointment because Coleridge's play also was rejected. Wordsworth took his defeat philosophically. It stimulated him to greater exertions. He wrote in fine spirits to James Tobin, a brother of the dramatist, John Tobin: "I am perfectly easy about the theatre; if I had no other means of employing myself, Mr. Lewis's success would have thrown me into despair." This refers to M. G. Lewis's flashy tragedy, "The Castle Spectre," which was having a profitable run in London.

"There is little need," he continues, "to advise me against publishing; it is a thing which I dread as much as death itself. This may serve as an example of the figure by rhetoricians called hyperbole, but privacy and quiet are my delight. No doubt you have heard of the munificence of the Wedgwoods towards Coleridge. I hope the fruit will be good as the seed is noble. We leave Alfoxden at Midsummer. The house is let . . . so our departure is decided. What may be our destination I cannot say. . . . We have no particular reason to be attached to the neighbourhood of Stowey, but the society of Coleridge and the friendship of Poole."

He laughingly mentions having written 1,300 lines of a poem in which he has contrived to convey most of the knowledge of which he is possessed, his object being "to give pictures of Nature, Man, and Society." He says that he has carved out work for at least a year and a half, and refers to essays "which must be written with eloquence, or not at all." "My eloquence," Wordsworth says, "modestly speaking, will all be carried off, at least for some time, into my poem." He

asks Tobin to collect books of travels for him, which are indispensable for his present labours, and he wishes to see "Mrs. Godwyn's Life." In Miss Wordsworth's Journal for April 14, we learn that "Mary Wollstonecraft's life, etc., came."

One essay at least he wrote, to illustrate, as he said many years afterwards, "that constitution and those tendencies of human nature which make the apparently motiveless actions of bad men intelligible to careful observers." It was published by Professor de Selincourt in *The Nineteenth Century and After* for November, 1926, having been recently found prefixed to a copy of "The Borderers" as revised for the stage in 1797, though from its tone it appears to have been composed in 1795. It is an extremely subtle but laboured study of morbid psychology, after reading which it is easy to see why the disciple of Godwin and observer of the perversions of well-meaning French extremists,

> "Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
> Yielded up moral questions in despair."

The visit to London, after so many months of quiet country life, acted as a stimulus to Wordsworth's productive powers. He returned to Alfoxden with a quickened appreciation of nature, and realizing that not even the mighty city held a man comparable in genius, attainments, and charm, to their neighbour and friend at Nether Stowey. Coleridge's magnetism extends even to those who endeavour to fasten their attention upon Wordsworth. Whenever the two are together, it is Coleridge who catches the eye and enthrals the ear. But he comes and goes, his intellectual fire darts now here and now there, his genius varies like the colour of a star, while Wordsworth, by slow but constant motion, rises in a calculable orbit and with a steady light. When Wordsworth lived at Alfoxden, they were in each other's houses almost every day. Their communion of spirit was close, and the result was a great quickening of their poetic powers. But the new life was more immediately evident in Coleridge. During these few months he com-

posed most of his best work—not only "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan," and the first part of "Christabel," but those warm outpourings of friendly confidence, those genial conversation poems, which are more endearing and only less wonderful: "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison," "Frost at Midnight," "Fears in Solitude," and "The Nightingale."

The story of how he wrote the "Ancient Mariner" illustrates the fact that, though they could together plan a work, it would in the end take form and spirit from an individual mind. On November 13, 1797, Coleridge, with Wordsworth and his sister, started from Alfoxden about four o'clock in the afternoon, intending to walk to Lynton and the Valley of Stones, on the North Devon coast, about thirty-five miles distant. With their small supply of money, it seemed a rash expenditure, but they light-heartedly put care aside by resolving to pay the expenses of the trip from the proceeds of a poem to be written for *The Monthly Magazine*. Thus relieved in mind, they tramped gaily over the Quantock Hills through the dark autumn evening, and spent the first night at the village of Watchet, on the Bristol Channel, planning the "Ancient Mariner" as they went. Coleridge invented most of the story, which he said was suggested to him by a dream of his friend Mr. Cruikshank, a resident of the Stowey neighbourhood. Wordsworth contributed the idea of poetic justice for the crime of killing an albatross. He had just been reading Shelvocke's "Voyages," where he had seen a description of this bird. He also suggested the gruesome incident of the navigation of the ship by the dead men. The three worked joyously together at the poem that night, Wordsworth contributing two or three complete lines. But the undertaking proved more congenial to Coleridge, and the poem is his. The trio completed their excursion, which took several days and furnished many delightful and droll recollections. Coleridge worked at the poem until it was finished, in March, on the 23rd of which month Dorothy wrote in her Journal: "Coleridge dined with us. He brought his

ballad finished." But it was the night-wind off salt water as he went, "one of three," down into Watchet that first brought to him the Mariner's hail.

That mysterious poem, "Christabel," was begun in 1797, and contains several observations of nature of which the originals are to be found in Dorothy's Journal from January 21 to March 25, 1798. She was gathering honey that spring for two "singing masons building roofs of gold."

The two poets were associated in another literary venture which was not so successful as the "Ancient Mariner." It was to have been a prose rhapsody, "The Wanderings of Cain," in three cantos, of which one, the second, has been preserved and printed among Coleridge's poems. In the tone of reverent tenderness with which he almost always mentions his friend, he thus, after thirty years, tells the story of this attempt:

"The work was to have been written in concert with another whose name is too venerable within the precincts of genius to be unnecessarily brought into connection with such a trifle, and who was then residing at a small distance from Nether Stowey. The title and subject were suggested by myself, who likewise drew out the scheme and the contents for each of the three books or cantos, of which the work was to consist, and which, the reader is to be informed, was to have been finished in one night! My partner undertook the first canto: I the second: and whichever had *done first* was to set about the third. Almost thirty years have passed by; yet at this moment I cannot without something more than a smile moot the question which of the two things was the more impracticable, for a mind so eminently original to compose another man's thoughts and fancies, or for a taste so austerely pure and simple to imitate the Death of Abel? Methinks I see his grand and noble countenance as at the moment when, having despatched my own portion of the task at full finger-speed, I hastened to him with my manuscript—that look of humorous despondency fixed on his almost blank sheet of paper, and then its silent mock-piteous admission of failure struggling with the sense of the exceeding ridiculousness of the whole scheme—which broke up in a laugh: and the Ancient Mariner was written instead."

Coleridge attempted the same subject in verse, and kept the introductory stanza, "which had been committed to writing for the purpose of procuring a friend's judgment on the metre." It is interesting to observe that the rhythm and the general musical effect are similar to those of Wordsworth's ballads, "The Last of the Flock," "The Idiot Boy," and "Peter Bell," composed about the same time. The same cadences, the same loose rhyming scheme, and the same length of line, were used for a similar description of innocent boyhood in a wilderness, by the mediæval German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach, in his "Parzeval." Coleridge's stanza is as follows:

> Encinctured with a twine of leaves,
> That leafy twine his only dress!
> A lovely Boy was plucking fruits,
> By moonlight, in a wilderness.
> The moon was bright, the air was free,
> And fruits and flowers together grew
> On many a shrub and many a tree:
> And all put on a gentle hue,
> Hanging in the shadowy air
> Like a picture rich and rare.
> It was a climate where, they say
> The night is more belov'd than day.
> But who that beauteous Boy beguil'd,
> That beauteous Boy to linger here?
> Alone, by night, a little child,
> In place so silent and so wild—
> Has he no friend, no loving mother near?

Because of Coleridge's quicker responsiveness to intellectual impressions, we find in his poems written between November, 1797, and the summer of 1798, a more complete record of the thoughts that must have occupied Wordsworth's mind than the latter's own poems of that period reveal. Wordsworth gathered the harvest too, but not so soon. We have every reason to distrust the testimony of strangers, and even his own deprecatory remarks in old age, to the effect that he was not at that time occupied with politics. He was living in close daily intercourse with the suffering mind

from whose anxiety were struck off "France: an Ode," and "Fears in Solitude," in February and April, 1798. These great poems, unsurpassed in our language as expressions of political feeling, show that the love of liberty still glowed as brightly as ever in Coleridge's breast. He still set the cause of humanity above insular pride. He still was tortured with a sense of the wrongs his country had committed. If at the same time he realized that the Revolution in France had deviated from its original course, if he turned heart-sick from a race who "still promising freedom" were "themselves too sensual to be free," there was little comfort for him in the thought either of those at home who expected "all change from change of constituted power," or of those who doted on the British Constitution "with a mad idolatry." To his far-seeing and humane mind it was an excruciating dilemma. There can be no doubt whatever that Wordsworth suffered like pangs. The astounding victories of Napoleon, meanwhile, were giving to the war-fever in England the aspect of exalted patriotism. There was panic in the air, to which the mutinies of the Nore and at Spithead gave a turn towards desperation and hardness.

Lloyd having left him on account of ill-health, Coleridge was almost penniless when winter came on. During the Wordsworths' visit to London, in December, he received an invitation to preach to the Unitarian congregation at Shrewsbury, and was on the point of accepting a call to be their pastor, when Josiah and Thomas Wedgwood, sons of the great potter, offered him an annuity of £150 for life, without conditions, as a mark of their appreciation of his poetic and philosophic genius. He had scruples against preaching for hire, and these generous and cultivated brothers hoped to save him for the work he was best fitted to do. Josiah Wedgwood's letter of January 10, containing their proposal, is as delicately worded as it is forcible:

"My brother and myself are possessed of a considerable superfluity of fortune; squandering and hoarding are equally distant from our inclinations. But we are

earnestly desirous to convert this superfluity into a fund of beneficence, and we have now been accustomed for some time, to regard ourselves rather as Trustees than Proprietors."

Coleridge preached on a few Sundays at Shrewsbury, but withdrew his candidature and visited the Wedgwoods. By February 3 he had returned to Nether Stowey, as we learn from an entry in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal for that date: "Walked with Coleridge over the hills." The Journal begins January 20, 1798, and up to this point is filled almost exclusively with minute observations of nature. In the interval Nether Stowey seems to have had little attraction, and is referred to only twice. On January 25 she writes, "Went to Poole's after tea," and on January 31, "Set forward to Stowey at half-past five." After Coleridge's return there is almost daily mention of walks to and from Nether Stowey, or wanderings with him in the woods above and around Alfoxden. Twice before he came she records "an uninteresting evening," but never again. There can hardly be in all the world a story of more perfect happiness than her pages tell. The day of her felicity was still in its dewy morning hours. She had her brother with her, contented and productive. They saw and felt as one creature. When Coleridge was with them their union was not disturbed, but enlarged and rendered more complete. This happy and fruitful intimacy is disclosed in Dorothy's Alfoxden Journal. On reading those charming pages one feels that one has come upon a hidden rill of pure water, not at its very source, however, for it flows already with a full current, as if accustomed to motion. In a partnership so close, it is hard to distinguish the original contribution of each member. When, for instance, did Dorothy Wordsworth acquire her habit of exactly noting what she saw out of doors? Surely, if she had been so interested in natural objects three years before, she would have expressed herself to Jane Pollard on this as on so many other subjects. There are preliminary touches in her letters from Racedown, and it is quite likely she began

writing some sort of nature notes there, but before she began to live with her brother this strain is rarely discoverable in her writings, and then chiefly when recalling his one visit to Forncett just before his graduation, or when referring to his poetry. Her own instincts appear to have been originally domestic and social. Notwithstanding his exquisite acknowledgment in the well-known line of "The Sparrow's Nest,"

> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,

it was he, or he and Coleridge together, who taught her to "see into the life of things." What she gave him is more fully told in the complete sentence which concludes that poem:

> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
> And humble cares and delicate fears;
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy.

After his long years of roving, unrestrained by the sweet bondage of domestic ties, her gentleness and womanly scruples, her fine discrimination and intensity of feeling, were a revelation to him. And in return he opened to her a new world, the world of natural objects. "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches" prove that he had obtained access to this realm without her assistance, and while she was still almost a stranger to his intellectual life. We may therefore regard the wonderful pages of her Journal as a record of remarks which were at least as certainly his as her own. Their literary form, which it is impossible to praise too highly, is, however, hers. She seldom indulges in a reflection, she seldom elaborates. Facts are all that concern her; yet, though she states facts very simply, there are always a fine glow of tenderness and some heightening touch, which spiritualize the details. Take, for example, the opening sentences of the first entry:

"ALFOXDEN, *January 20th*, 1798.—The green paths down the hill-sides are channels for streams. The young wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges, the sheep are gathered together on

the slopes. After the wet dark days, the country seems more populous. It peoples itself in the sunbeams. The garden, mimic of spring, is gay with flowers."

Three days later she notes: "The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the tops of the hills, which we could never hear in summer. We attribute this partly to the bareness of the trees, but chiefly to the absence of the singing of birds, the hum of insects, that noiseless noise which lives in the summer air. The villages marked out by beautiful beds of smoke."

Every day she and her brother walked together, sometimes in the wood that separated Alfoxden House from the village of Holford, sometimes on the hills above, whence they could see the turbid waters of the Bristol Channel and the Welsh coast beyond. They dipped into the coombes, or little valleys sloping to the sea, where autumn lingered long and spring came early. A characteristic entry is that of January 26:

"Walked upon the hill-tops; followed the sheep-tracks till we overlooked the larger coombe. Sat in the sunshine. The distant sheep-bells, the sound of the stream; the woodman winding along the half-marked road with his laden pony; locks of wool still spangled with the dewdrops; the blue-grey sea, shaded with immense masses of cloud, not streaked; the sheep glittering in the sunshine. Returned through the wood. The trees skirting the wood, being exposed more directly to the action of the sea-breeze, stripped of the network of their upper boughs, which are stiff and erect, like black skeletons; the ground strewed with the red berries of the holly. Set forward before two o'clock. Returned a little after four."

She notes "the ivy twisting round the oaks like bristled serpents," and how at night "the shadows of the oaks blackened, and their lines became more strongly marked" when "the moon burst through the invisible veil which enveloped her."

There are but few touches due to sentiment or fancy. The actual is sufficiently wonderful. It is as if she were seeing this infinite world for the first time. She was very happy, in high health and spirits. The ordinary

sights and sounds of country life were so exhilarating that to record them was a joyous solemnity, and she did not care to speculate upon their significance. To treat them as symbols would have seemed a strangely perverse and impertinent course. Sometimes, with a faculty rarely found except in children and painters, she sees things as they appear to be, and not as she knows they really are. For example, one evening she notes that the sea was "big and white, swelled to the very shores, but round and high in the middle." Could words possibly produce a more detailed and yet unified picture than this on February 24?—

"Went to the hill-top. Sat a considerable time overlooking the country towards the sea. The air blew pleasantly round us. The landscape mildly interesting. The Welsh hills capped by a huge range of tumultuous white clouds. The sea, spotted with white, of a bluish-grey in general, and streaked with darker lines. The near shores clear; scattered farm-houses, half concealed by green mossy orchards, fresh straw lying at the doors; hay-stacks in the fields. Brown fallows, the springing wheat, like a shade of green over the brown earth, and the choice meadow plots, full of sheep and lambs, of a soft and vivid green; a few wreaths of blue smoke, spreading along the ground; the oaks and beeches in the hedges retaining their yellow leaves; the distant prospect on the land side, islanded with sunshine; the sea, like a basin full to the margin; the dark fresh-ploughed fields; the turnips of a lively rough green. Returned through the wood."

One scarcely knows whether to admire more such a distinct stroke as that "lively rough green" of the turnips, or the general composition of the picture, which is so plainly a day in late February or early March. Again, she mentions a prospect "*curiously* spread out for even minute inspection, though so extensive that the mind is afraid to calculate its bounds."

Their walks were usually in the afternoon and evening, and they brought home bundles of sticks which they gathered along the way. Sometimes Basil was with them, sometimes Tom Poole, and very often Cole-

ridge. The latter was at Shrewsbury preaching in December, and till January 29, when he visited the Wedgwoods. He probably returned to Nether Stowey on February 3, and came at once to Alfoxden. On that date he is mentioned for the first time in the Journal. "A mild morning," Dorothy writes, "the windows open at breakfast, the redbreasts singing in the garden. Walked with Coleridge over the hills." Less methodical than even the Wordsworths, he appears to have had no scruple about breaking in upon their work at any time of day or night. So we find, under date of February 4: "Walked a great part of the way to Stowey with Coleridge." February 6: "Walked to Stowey over the hills." And so throughout this month and the next, and till April 9, few were the days on which the three did not meet somewhere. From about April 9 to 18 Coleridge was in Devonshire, visiting his relatives at Ottery St. Mary, and on his return the pleasant intercourse began again.

Most of the entries are very brief. When Coleridge had talked to his heart's content, there was probably no time left except for the daily tasks, such as "hanging out linen." They did not keep country hours—never, at least, when he was of the party. Three successive entries show how the time flew—March 25: "Walked to Coleridge's after tea. Arrived at home at one o'clock. The night cloudy but not dark." 26th: "Went to meet Wedgwood at Coleridge's after dinner. Reached home at half-past twelve, a fine moonlight night; half-moon." 27th: "Dined at Poole's. Arrived at home a little after twelve, a partially cloudy, but light night, very cold." On a day of very high wind "Coleridge came to avoid the smoke; stayed all night," and they walked in the wood. Next day she "walked to Crookham [Crewcombe she means] with Coleridge and Wm. to make the appeal. Left Wm. there, and parted with Coleridge at the top of the hill." This perhaps refers to the difficulty with Mrs. St. Albyn about staying at Alfoxden. She frequently refers to her brother's being tired or ill. Apparently the Cole-

ridges stayed with them for some days in March, and shortly afterwards she mentions poems which her brother was composing, among them "The Thorn," "A Whirl-blast from Behind the Hill," and "Peter Bell." A striking example of how she and her brother thought the same thoughts and used the same words is to be found by comparing his poem, "A Night-Piece," with the entries in her Journal for January 25 and 31. She writes:

"The sky spread over with one continuous cloud, whitened by the light of the moon, which, though her dim shape was seen, did not throw forth so strong a light as to checquer the earth with shadows. At once the clouds seemed to cleave asunder, and left her in the centre of a black-blue vault. She sailed along, followed by multitudes of stars, small, and bright, and sharp. Their brightness seemed concentrated (half-moon)." And again: "Set forward to Stowey at half-past five. A violent storm in the wood; sheltered under the hollies. When we left home the moon immensely large, the skies scattered over with clouds. These soon closed in, contracting the dimensions of the moon without concealing her."

The poem is as follows:

The sky is overcast
With a continuous cloud of texture close,
Heavy and wan, all whitened by the Moon,
Which through that vale is indistinctly seen,
A dull, contracted circle, yielding light
So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls,
Chequering the ground—from rock, plant, tree, or tower
At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
Bent earthwards; he looks up—the clouds are split
Asunder,—and above his head he sees
The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
There in a blue-black vault she sails along,
Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives; how fast they wheel away,
Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree,
But they are silent;—still they roll along
Immeasurably distant; and the vault,

Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.

Nearly fifty years later the poet said of these lines: "Composed on the road between Nether Stowey and Alfoxden extempore. I distinctly recollect the very moment when I was struck, as described, 'He looks up —the clouds are split, etc.'"

It is in the Alfoxden Journal that we read the first of Dorothy Wordsworth's many remarks on the exhaustion which it cost her brother to compose poetry. On April 20 she writes: "Walked in the evening up the hill dividing the Coombes. Came home the Crookham way, by the thorn and the 'little muddy pond.' Nine o'clock at our return. William all the morning engaged in wearisome composition. The moon crescent. *Peter Bell* begun."

On Wednesday, May 16, she writes: "Coleridge, William, and myself, set forward to the Chedder rocks; slept at Bridgwater;" and under date of Tuesday the 22nd she writes: "Walked to Chedder. Slept at Cross." Here these precious jottings come to an end.

It seems likely that after visiting the wonderful limestone gorge at Cheddar, they proceeded, perhaps by way of Wells and Bristol, to the valley of the Wye, and made the visit to Thelwall's farm which is mentioned in the Fenwick note to an "Anecdote for Fathers." It was about forty miles west of the Wye, and beyond a mountain range.

In May also probably occurred the visit of William Hazlitt to Nether Stowey, to which we owe a marvellously vivid description of Wordsworth as he then appeared. We may depend upon Hazlitt to have set down aught in malice that occurred to him. He would not be inclined to change a single feature by way of flattery. We have, indeed, to be on our guard with him, against the venom of his rancour, as when he declares that

Wordsworth had the free use of Alfoxden, and consequently grew soft-hearted towards Toryism. Anyone who is at all well acquainted with Hazlitt's method of suggesting falsehood will know how to value this insinuation. Of the close accuracy of his portraiture there is, however, no reason to doubt. He was an almost unrivalled master of personal description, and his account of Wordsworth corresponds trait for trait, down to the twitching lines of the mouth, with a drawing made by W. Shuter in April, to which Dorothy referred in her Journal of April 26.*

When Coleridge preached at Shrewsbury in January, Hazlitt, who was a lad of nineteen, walked ten miles to hear him. The poet-philosopher-preacher completed his conquest during a subsequent visit at Hazlitt's home, and dazzled the boy by inviting him to visit Nether Stowey in the spring. Hazlitt's reminiscences, which he called "My First Acquaintance with Poets," were published, in substance, in 1817, and afterwards amplified and reprinted. I quote from the "Memoirs of William Hazlitt," 1867:

"I arrived," says Hazlitt, "and was well received. . . . In the afternoon Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St. Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened, and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath 'the scales that fence' our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the 'Lyrical Ballads,' which were still in manuscript or in the form of 'Sibylline Leaves.' I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family-portraits of the age of George I. and II., and from the wooded declivity of the

* See the frontispiece.

adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

> . . . hear the loud stag speak.

"That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud, with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of 'Betty Foy.' I was not critically or skeptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the 'Thorn,' the 'Mad Mother,'* and the 'Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman,' I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

> In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or the first welcome breath of Spring,

> While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

> Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and faith,
> Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldfinch sang. He said, however (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces; that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of

* "Her eyes are wild."

him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own 'Peter Bell.' There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits, but he was teased into making it regular and heavy. Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr* like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that 'his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life.' He had been to see the 'Castle Spectre,' by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said 'it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove.' This *ad captandum* merit was, however, by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. . . . We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of 'Peter Bell' in the open air; and the comments made upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, 'his face was a book where men might read strange matters,' and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accomplishment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animating, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical*."

The reader must disentangle for himself what is original in this passage from what was woven into it upon reflection and after the lapse of years. There may well be some inaccuracies, but on the whole this is much the most complete and interesting portrayal of Wordsworth in youth or early manhood that we possess. The precise date, and even the month, of Hazlitt's visit is uncertain. He says:

"Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*."

He describes a jaunt along the coast from Dunster to Lynton, with Coleridge and a young man from Stowey. Coleridge told him that he and Wordsworth had once intended making the Valley of Rocks, near Lynton, the scene of a prose tale, and that the "Lyrical Ballads"

"were an experiment to be tried by him and Wordsworth to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally disregarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II"

A picture of the sordid side of rural life, composed by Wordsworth about this time, and known in his family as the "Somersetshire Tragedy," was not deemed fit for publication, and was destroyed by Professor Knight!

The lease of Alfoxden expired June 24, and two days later the Wordsworths were homeless wanderers again. The poet gave the following account of their first movements:

"We left Alfoxden on Monday morning, the 26th of June, stayed with Coleridge till the Monday following, then set forth on foot towards Bristol. We were at Cottle's for a week, and thence we went toward the banks of the Wye. We crossed the Severn Ferry, and walked ten miles further to Tintern Abbey, a very

beautiful ruin on the Wye. The next morning we walked along the river through Monmouth to Goderich Castle, there slept, and returned the next day to Tintern, thence to Chepstow, and from Chepstow back again in a boat to Tintern, where we slept, and thence back in a small vessel to Bristol."

The most precious result of this journey was the poem entitled "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," of which Wordsworth says, in the Fenwick note: "No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down until I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume of which so much has been said in these notes"—*i.e.*, "Lyrical Ballads."

ALFOXDEN.

CHAPTER XII

"LYRICAL BALLADS"

We are now approaching the most momentous event in Wordsworth's life, so far as his connection with the public is concerned. For many months he and Coleridge had been preparing to make what proved to be one of the most gallant adventures in literary history. They had exerted themselves to produce enough poetry to fill a volume, and were already planning with Cottle for its publication. The two poets had been in communication with Cottle on the subject of printing their tragedies. In a letter to Cottle dated merely 1798, Coleridge says: "I am requested by Wordsworth to put to you the following questions: What could you, conveniently and prudently, and what would you give for—first, our two Tragedies, with small prefaces, containing an analysis of our principal characters? . . . Second, Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain and Tale of a Woman; which poems, with a few others which he will add, and notes, will make a volume." To this Cottle appends the statement: "I offered Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Wordsworth thirty guineas each, as proposed, for their two tragedies; but which, after some hesitation, was declined, from the hope of introducing one or both on the stage. The volume of Poems was left for some future arrangement."

According to Cottle, he met Wordsworth for the first time at Stowey, though, as we have seen, there is reason to think their acquaintance began at Bristol long before the poet settled in Somersetshire. The passage in Cottle's "Reminiscences" is very interesting:

"A visit to Mr. Coleridge at Stowey had been the means of my introduction to Mr. Wordsworth, who read me many of his Lyrical Pieces, when I immediately per-

ceived in them extraordinary merit, and advised him to publish them, expressing a belief that they would be well received. I further said he should be at no risk; that I would give him the same sum which I had given to Mr. Coleridge and to Mr. Southey, and that it would be a gratifying circumstance to me, to have been the publisher of the first volumes of three such poets, as Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth; such a distinction might never again occur to a provincial bookseller. To the idea of publishing he expressed a strong objection, and after several interviews I left him, with an earnest wish that he would reconsider his determination. Soon after Mr. Wordsworth sent me the following letter:

"'ALLFOXDEN,
"'*12th April*, 1798.

"'MY DEAR COTTLE,

"'. . . You will be pleased to hear that I have gone on very rapidly adding to my stock of poetry. Do come and let me read it to you under the old trees in the park. We have a little more than two months to stay in this place. Within these four days the season has advanced with greater rapidity than I ever remember, and the country becomes almost every hour more lovely. God bless you.

"'Your affectionate friend,
"'W. WORDSWORTH.'"

The invitation was repeated by Coleridge and again, in the following note, by Wordsworth:

"DEAR COTTLE,

"We look for you with great impatience. We will never forgive you if you do not come. I say nothing of the 'Salisbury Plain' till I see you. I am determined to finish it, and equally so that you shall publish.

"I have lately been busy about another plan, which I do not wish to mention till I see you; let this be very, very soon, and stay a week if possible; as much longer as you can. God bless you, dear Cottle,

"Yours sincerely,
"W. WORDSWORTH.

"ALLFOXDEN,
"*9th May*, 1798."

Cottle prints in the same connection, but without date, a long letter from Coleridge, which shows that he and the Wordsworths were trying to raise money for

some unusual expense, undoubtedly their trip to Germany. It was perhaps written at about the same time as Wordsworth's of May 9. There is no mention of Cottle's visit in Dorothy's Journal, but it might have occurred between May 9 and 16, when she made no entries. Omitting several sentences already quoted, the letter is as follows:

"My dear Cottle,

"Neither Wordsworth or myself could have been otherwise than uncomfortable, if anybody but yourself had received from us the first offer of our Tragedies, and of the volume of Wordsworth's Poems. At the same time, we did not expect that you could, with prudence and propriety, advance such a sum as we should want at the time we specified. In short, we both regard the publication of our Tragedies as an evil. It is not impossible but that in happier times, they may be brought on the stage: and to throw away this chance for a mere trifle, would be to make the present moment act fraudulently and usuriously towards the future time. . . . We consider the publication of them an evil on any terms; but our thoughts were bent on a plan for the accomplishment of which a certain sum of money was necessary, (the whole,) at that particular time, and in order to this we resolved, although reluctantly, to part with our Tragedies: that is, if we could obtain thirty guineas for each, and at less than thirty guineas Wordsworth will not part with the copy-right of his volume of Poems. We shall offer the Tragedies to no one, for we have determined to procure the money some other way. If you choose the volume of Poems, at the price mentioned, to be paid at the time specified, i.e. thirty guineas, to be paid sometime in the last fortnight of July, you may have them; but remember, my dear fellow! I write to you now merely as a bookseller, and entreat you, in your answer, to consider yourself only; as to us, although money is necessary to our plan, yet the plan is not necessary to our happiness; and if it were, W. could sell his Poems for that sum to someone else, or we could procure the money without selling the Poems. So I entreat you again and again, in your answer, which must be immediate, consider yourself only. . . .

"At all events, come down, Cottle, as soon as you can, but before Midsummer, and we will procure a horse

easy as thine own soul, and we will go on a roam to Linton and Linmouth, which, if thou comest in May, will be in all their pride of woods and waterfalls, not to speak of its august cliffs, and the green ocean, and the vast Valley of Stones, all which live disdainful of the seasons, or accept new honours only from the winter's snow. At all events come down, and cease not to believe me much and affectionately your friend,

"S. T. COLERIDGE."

Cottle says that he accepted these invitations, and spent a week with Coleridge and Wordsworth at Alfoxden House, during which time, besides the reading of manuscript poems, they took him on the proposed "roam."

"At this interview," he says, "it was determined that the volume should be published under the title of 'Lyrical Ballads,' on the terms stipulated in a former letter: that this volume should not contain the poem of 'Salisbury Plain,' but only an extract from it; that it should not contain the poem of 'Peter Bell,' but consist rather of sundry shorter pieces more recently written. I had recommended two volumes, but one was fixed on, and that to be published anonymously. It was to be begun immediately, and with the 'Ancient Mariner'; which poem I brought with me to Bristol."

Cottle had good reason to expect great things of Wordsworth. In "Early Recollections," I. 251, and "Reminiscences," p. 143, he writes:

"Mr. Coleridge says, in a letter received from him March 8th, 1798, 'The giant Wordsworth—God love him! When I speak in the terms of admiration due to his intellect, I fear lest these terms should keep out of sight the amiableness of his manners. He has written near twelve hundred lines of blank verse, superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which any way resembles it.'"

It is a pleasure to know that nine years afterwards the flame of Coleridge's admiration burned just as brightly, for Cottle says that in 1807 he received a letter from him, saying of Wordsworth: "He is one whom God knows I love and honour as far beyond myself as both morally and intellectually he is above me."

The poets objected to some of the details proposed by Cottle, and there was more correspondence on the subject. In the course of the summer, the Alfoxden idyll being at an end, Coleridge removed to Westbury, two miles from Bristol. After the Wye excursion, as we have seen, the Wordsworths returned to Bristol, about July 9, and appear to have remained there six weeks. The Bishop of Lincoln, quoting either from letters of Miss Wordsworth or from some journal of hers now lost, reports that on July 18, 1798, she wrote: "William's poems are now in the press; they will be out in six weeks"; and on September 13: "They are printed, but not published . . . in one small volume, without the name of the author; their title is 'Lyrical Ballads, with other poems.' Cottle has given thirty guineas for William's share of the volume."

It was printed at Bristol on or about September 1. The impression consisted of five hundred copies. As originally printed, the title-page was:

"Lyrical Ballads/with/A few other Poems./Bristol:/Printed by Biggs & Cottle,/For T.N.Longman, Pater-Noster Row, London./1798."

It was an octavo in paper boards. Other copies have the following title-page:

"Lyrical Ballads,/with/A few other Poems./London:/Printed for J. & A. Arch, Gracechurch-street./1798."

Only one criticism of the book appeared, so far as I know, before December, and that was Southey's very unfavourable and condescending article in *The Critical Review* for October.

On August 27 Wordsworth and his sister arrived in London, having seen the University of Oxford on the way. Where they stayed or how they occupied themselves in London is not known. We do not touch solid ground again until Dorothy begins her Journal of their travels, without which their residence in Germany would be almost a blank to us. We know that the tour had been long in contemplation, and was carefully planned. As early as March 11, 1798, Wordsworth had written to James Losh, a friend at Carlisle, urging him to join the

travelling party, which was to include both Mr. and Mrs. Coleridge. It was their plan, he said, to pass two years in Germany. They hoped to settle near a university, and, if possible, in a mountainous district. On account of the expense of travelling, they wished to find this place not far from Hamburg. All these requirements point to Göttingen. Wordsworth also confides to Losh that he has written 706 lines of a poem, which he hopes to make of considerable utility. "Its title," he says, "will be The Recluse; or, Views of Nature, Man, and Society." We are not at all bound to suppose that these lines were ever included among the 1,200 or 1,300 previously mentioned.

They purposed in those two years "to acquire the German language," and to furnish themselves "with a tolerable stock of information in natural science." This is what he tells Losh, in behalf not only of himself, but of his sister and the Coleridges. M. Legouis in his admirable chapter on Wordsworth's Relation to Science, has shown that these were not words written at random, but that many of the subjects already chosen by the poets and many peculiarities in the work they had already accomplished were determined by a wish to study "facts of the soul" in a scientific manner. Their purpose was to observe actual cases, unhampered by the factitious distinctions between the normal and the abnormal set up by psychologists, and to enrich the science of mind, at that time so meagrely furnished with examples.

There is even a hint of these scientific pretensions in a letter from Charles Lamb to Southey, dated July 28, 1798:

"Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to the eternal regret of his native Devonshire, emigrates to Westphalia—'Poor Lamb' (these were his last words) 'if he wants any *knowledge* he may apply to me'—in ordinary cases, I thanked him, I have an 'Encyclopædia' at hand, but on such an occasion as going over to a German university, I could not refrain from sending him the following propositions, to be by him defended or oppugned (or both) at Leipsic or Gottingen."

Then follows a list of propositions, similar to a list which Lamb had sent to Coleridge himself, and all implying that the latter was a liar, a sophist, and a sentimentalist. Charles Lloyd had poisoned Lamb's mind with false reports about their friend. Lamb had for once allowed his playfulness to turn into something like mischief. Coleridge had taken offence. Their old comradeship had been rudely broken. Dorothy Wordsworth had been brought into the quarrel by the meddlesome Lloyd. Coleridge wrote a generous letter, full of patience and true humility, to his mistaken friend, beginning, "Lloyd has informed me through Miss Wordsworth that you intend no longer to correspond with me."* The summer of 1798 was thus rendered a time of much unhappiness for Coleridge. His former pupil, Charles Lloyd, had slandered him. He may have suspected his wife's brother-in-law and his former associate, Southey, of trying to undermine his literary reputation, and at least he felt hurt by Southey's self-righteous aloofness. He thought he had lost the love of his oldest friend, Charles Lamb, and the dream of having the Wordsworths always near him at Alfoxden was shattered. Nether Stowey was no longer Arcady, but a stupid out-of-the-way village. His cottage was no longer the delightful trysting-place of gods and muses, but the mean, cramped, and almost squalid house which Poole long before warned him it was. Moreover, for a man who naturally disliked public controversy, and desired to cultivate his mind in tranquillity, he was achieving entirely too much notoriety. He said very truly that his name "stank." A group of clever young Tory writers, in *The Anti-Jacobin*, were assailing, amid general applause, the reputation of poets, orators, and pamphleteers, who had been so imprudent as to favour the Revolution. They drove this routed and discouraged band before them in a savage pursuit. To be overtaken by the light cavalry

* Mr. E. V. Lucas expresses his opinion ("Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 116) that about this time Lamb wrote his pathetic lines, "The Old Familiar Faces," and that the friend mentioned in the next to the last stanza was Coleridge.

of *The Anti-Jacobin* was not only unpleasant, but dangerous. In the issue for July 9, 1798, Coleridge was distinctly mentioned, and Wordsworth probably alluded to, in the scurrilous verses entitled "New Morality." Priestley, Wakefield, Thelwall, Paine, Williams, Godwin, and Holcroft, are pilloried as admirers of Lepaux, a member of the French Directory, and leader of the Theophilanthropists; and in the same passage occur these lines:

> *Couriers* and *Stars*, Sedition's evening host,
> Thou *Morning Chronicle* and *Morning Post*,
> Whether ye make the Rights of Man your theme,
> Your country libel, and your God blaspheme,
> Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,
> Still, blasphemous or blackguard, praise Lepaux!
>
> And ye five other wandering bards, that move
> In sweet accord of harmony and love,
> Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd, and Lamb and Co.,
> Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lepaux!

The newspapers mentioned were Whig journals. Many of Coleridge's poems were first printed in *The Morning Post*. *The Anti-Jacobin* was succeeded in July by another publication of the same character and tendency, *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, which contained caricatures by Gillray, in which Coleridge and Southey are represented with asses' heads, and Lloyd and Lamb as toad and frog. In a set of verses, "The Anarchists," Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, and Lloyd, are held up to ridicule, but there is no allusion to a fifth member of the company. Paine, Priestley, Thelwall, Godwin, Wakefield, and Holcroft, figure also in this libel.

The plan of taking Mrs. Coleridge to Germany was given up. She and the two children, Hartley and Berkeley, were left at Nether Stowey, and about September 10, Coleridge joined the Wordsworths in London. The anonymous volume of joint authorship, "Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems," was published, probably just after his arrival, and Coleridge arranged with Johnson, the bookseller, to publish his "Fears in Solitude, written in 1798, during the alarm

of an invasion; to which are added France, an Ode; and Frost at Midnight."

"Lyrical Ballads" contained the following poems: "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere"; "The Foster-Mother's Tale"; "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite"; "The Nightingale: a Conversational Poem"; "The Female Vagrant"; "Goody Blake and Harry Gill"; "Lines written at a small distance from my House, and sent by my little Boy to the Person to whom they are addressed"; "Simon Lee, the old Huntsman"; "Anecdote for Fathers"; "We are Seven"; "Lines written in early Spring"; "The Thorn"; "The last of the Flock"; "The Dungeon"; "The Mad Mother"; "The Idiot Boy"; "Lines written near Richmond, upon the Thames, at Evening"; "Expostulation and Reply"; "The Tables turned—an Evening Scene, on the same subject"; "Old Man travelling"; "The Complaint of a forsaken Indian Woman"; "The Convict"; "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey." Of these twenty-three pieces, four were written by Coleridge—"The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere," "The Foster-Mother's Tale," "The Nightingale," and "The Dungeon." The ineffective titles of Wordsworth's contributions show how incapable he was of perceiving small occasions of ridicule. It is a pity that many of his best poems are marred with ill-sounding labels instead of having real names appropriate to their contents. He erred in this way not through indifference to popularity, but through a sort of pedantry, a habit of paying too close attention to his own mental history.

On Friday, September 14, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Coleridge, and a young man from Stowey named John Chester, left London by stage-coach. They reached Yarmouth at noon next day, and sailed for Hamburg in a packet-boat on Sunday morning. Of their voyage, and the first few weeks of their sojourn in Germany, we have detailed but not very systematic accounts in a Journal kept by Miss Wordsworth and some letters of Coleridge printed in *The Friend* for

November 23, December 7, and December 21, 1809, and reprinted in "Biographia Literaria" under the title of "Satyrane's Letters." The travellers appear to have been in very gay spirits. Coleridge's description of the passage sounds like the aimless rattle of a clever boy. He exhibits the prejudices of a person who has never been outside of his native land. He objects to the speech, the manners, and the complexions, of the foreigners on board, except a French *émigré*, with whom he and his friends continued to associate for some time after landing.

On arriving at Hamburg, Wordsworth went to seek lodgings, while the others, immobile through ignorance of foreign ways and languages, guarded the luggage. His knowledge of French served them in good stead. After breakfasting with their French friend, they passed the day in sight-seeing, and went to the French Theatre. They visited the English bookseller, Remnant, where they bought Bürger's poems and Percy's "Reliques." Their characteristic interest in country life led them to various small towns in the neighbourhood—Blankenese, Harburg, and Altona. They made the acquaintance of one of the numerous brothers of the poet Klopstock, perhaps Victor, the newspaper editor, who introduced them to Christoph Daniel Ebeling, professor of history and Greek at the Hamburg academic gymnasium, and afterwards the well-known librarian of the city.

At Herr Klopstock's house they met at dinner his brother, Friedrich Gottlieb, the poet, who, Dorothy tells us, "maintained an animated conversation with William during the whole afternoon." On another occasion Coleridge and Wordsworth called on the aged German poet, and had a long conversation in French, Wordsworth acting as interpreter. Coleridge now and then interposed a question in Latin. Klopstock confessed that he knew very little concerning the history of German poetry and the elder German poets; "the subject had not particularly excited his curiosity." But he talked of Milton and Glover, and "thought Glover's blank verse superior to Milton's," but, after all, he

appeared not to know much about Milton, whom he had read in a prose translation when he was fourteen. Wordsworth proceeded to set him straight, giving "his definition and notion of harmonious verse, that it consisted (the English iambic blank verse above all) in the apt arrangement of pauses and cadences, and the sweep of whole paragraphs." The talk covered a wide range; the venerable author, in his feeble state of health, aroused the sympathy of his young English admirers; and when they left him they walked on the ramparts, "discoursing together on the poet and his conversation," till their attention was diverted to the beauty and singularity of the sunset and the effects on the objects round them. Wordsworth returned more than once to talk with Klopstock, and they discoursed not only on poetry, but on the Kantian philosophy, on Wolf, Nicolai, and Engel, on Rousseau, on the drama. Wordsworth expressed his preference for Dryden over Pope. Klopstock spoke favourably of Goethe, and especially of Wieland, but said that Schiller could not live. Wordsworth took copious notes of these conversations, and it is evident that he was well versed in contemporary German literature. Klopstock, they found, had once been an enthusiast for the French Revolution, but was now quite turned against it.

The friends must have realized that they could never learn German if they kept together, and on Sunday, October 1, Coleridge and Chester set out for Ratzeburg, a small town about thirty-five miles to the north-east. Two days later the Wordsworths took the diligence to Brunswick. "Dorothy and I," he wrote to Poole, "are going to speculate further up in the country." In the same letter which contains this announcement he remarks: "I have one word to say about Alfoxden: pray, keep your eye upon it. If any series of accidents should bring it again into the market, we should be glad to have it, if we could manage it." Over wretched roads they travelled by diligence across the Luneburg Heath, and into the Harz Mountains. It took them nearly two days to reach Brunswick, and one day more

to get to Goslar, which was their destination. In this ancient and beautiful little city they appear to have remained at least till January. In summer it would have been a delightful residence, owing to its situation among the hills; but they soon exhausted its winter attractions, and, failing to make many acquaintances, were forced to lead a very secluded life. Miss Wordsworth described it as a lifeless town, and complained that if a man wished to go into society, and had his wife or sister with him, he would be obliged to give entertainments. So they tried to learn German from the family with whom they lived, and by reading. "William," wrote she to Mrs. Marshall, "is very industrious. His mind is always active; indeed, too much so. He over-wearies himself, and suffers from pain and weakness in the side."

The Wordsworths, while at Goslar, lived in a house which is still standing—No. 86, Breite-strasse. It was built after the great fire of 1728, was formerly No. 107, belonged to St. Stephen's parish, and was occupied in 1799 by the widow of Georg Christian Ernst Deppermann.

Coleridge, meanwhile, was meeting many people and enjoying many advantages at Ratzeburg, for which he said he had to pay dear. "Including *all* expenses," he wrote to Poole, "I have not lived at less than two pounds a week. Wordsworth (from whom I receive long and affectionate letters) has enjoyed scarcely one advantage, but his expenses have been considerably less than they were in England." Coleridge was amassing material for a Life of Lessing, a work suited to his genius, and called for by the needs of his time, but which he never wrote. Wordsworth's surroundings at Goslar are thus described in the Fenwick note to the poem beginning "A plague on your languages, German and Norse":

"A bitter winter it was when these verses were composed by the side of my Sister, in our lodgings at a draper's house in the romantic imperial town of Goslar, on the edge of the Hartz Forest. In this town the

THE HOUSE IN GOSLAR WHERE THE WORDSWORTHS LIVED IN 1798

German emperors of the Franconian line were accustomed to keep their court, and it retains vestiges of ancient splendour. So severe was the cold of this winter, that, when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron. I slept in a room over a passage which was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say, rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night."

On January 4, 1799, Coleridge wrote to Poole: "Wordsworth has left Goslar, and is on his road into higher Saxony to cruise for a pleasanter place; he has made but little progress in the language." Ten days later, in a letter to his wife, he says: "I hear as often from Wordsworth as letters can go backward and forward in a country where fifty miles a day and night is expeditious travelling! He seems to have employed more time in writing English than in studying German. No wonder! for he might as well have been in England as at Goslar, in the situation which he chose and with his unseeking manners. He has now left it, and is on his journey to Nordhausen." He thinks Wordsworth is hampered by having his sister with him, because the Germans cannot understand a young woman's being given so much freedom, and will not admit the pair to their homes. "Still," he goes on, "male acquaintance he might have had, and had I been at Goslar I would have had them; but W., God love him, seems to have lost his spirits and almost his inclination for it."

Coleridge left Ratzeburg on February 6, and arrived at Göttingen on the 12th, by way of Hanover. Had the Wordsworths been still at Goslar, he would hardly have passed so near without visiting them. On the other hand, Mr. Gordon Wordsworth informs me that there exists a letter from Dorothy dated "Nordhausen, Feb. 27, '99," from which it is clear that she and her brother had left Goslar on February 23, a Saturday, and, travelling either on foot or in a post-waggon, and sleeping every night in a fresh place, had got as far as

Nordhausen, and their evident plan was to continue the process. She says the morning of the 23rd was "a delightful morning," and speaks of the fir-woods. The tone of her letter seems to imply that she, at least, was making this journey for the first time. Had it not been for this letter, I should have had no hesitation in saying that they left Goslar early in January. There is nothing more till April 23.

Coleridge came to Göttingen provided with letters of introduction to the university librarian and one of the professors, matriculated at once, and plunged into study. It was here that he received, a few weeks later, the news of his little son Berkeley's death, and in writing to Poole about that sad event, and how it shook his sense of security, he says, April 6: "Some months ago Wordsworth transmitted me a most sublime epitaph. Whether it had any reality I cannot say. Most probably, in some gloomier moment, he had fancied the moment in which his sister would die:

EPITAPH.

A slumber did my spirit seal,
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.
No motion has she now, no force,
She neither hears nor sees:
Mov'd round in Earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees!

Two or three unpublished letters of Coleridge to Wordsworth, written while they were both in Germany, express his longing to be with his friends: "I am sure," he writes, "I need not say how you are incorporated into the better part of my being; how, whenever I spring forward into the future with noble affections, I always alight by your side." He sends them some experiments he has made in hexameter verse, which were long afterwards included among his printed works. Even through his technicalities there pierces a note of pathos. He is lonely and ill and weak:

William, my teacher, my friend! dear William and dear Dorothea!

* * * * *

William, my head and my heart, dear Poet that feelest and thinkest!
Dorothy, eager of soul, my most affectionate sister!
Many a mile, O! many a wearisome mile are ye distant,
Long, long, comfortless roads, with no one eye that doth know us.
O! it is all too far to send to you mockeries idle:
Yea, and I feel it not right! But O! my friends, my beloved!
Feverish and wakeful I lie,—I am weary of feeling and thinking;
Every thought is worn *down*,—I am weary, yet cannot be vacant.
Five long hours have I tossed, rheumatic heats, dry and flushing,
Gnawing behind in my head, and wandering and throbbing about me,
Busy and tiresome, my friends, as the beat of the boding night-spider.

* * * * *

"The last line which I wrote I remember, and write it for the truth of the sentiment, scarcely less true in company than in pain and solitude:

William, my head and my heart! dear William and dear Dorothea!
You have all in each other; but I am lonely, and want you!"

The Wordsworths were far less constant this winter than Coleridge in their attachment to a place of abode. The Bishop of Lincoln, who was favoured with information which is now lost, is explicit in his statement that they left Goslar on February 10. He implies that they went pretty far south, "*to a more genial climate*"; for he writes of the poet: "He felt inspired by the change of place. When he set forth from this imperial city [Goslar], so dull and dreary as it had been to him, and when the prospect of a transition from its frost and snow to a more genial climate opened upon him, he seemed to be like one emancipated from the thraldom of a prison: it gave life and alacrity to his soul." Clement Carlyon,* an English medical student, arrived at Göttingen on March 22, 1799. Coleridge had arrived on February 12. In the interval the Wordsworths appear to have visited Coleridge. "Soon after Coleridge's arrival at Göttingen," writes Carlyon,† "Mr. Wordsworth and his sister came from Goslar to pay him a

* Clement Carlyon: "Early Years and Late Reflections," I. 16.
† *Ibid.*, 196.

visit, and I have been informed, by one well acquainted with the fact, that the two philosophers rambled away together for a day or two (leaving Miss Wordsworth at Göttingen), for the better enjoyment of an entire intercommunion of thought, thereby becoming the whole world to each other, and not this world only, which in their metaphysical excursions was probably but a secondary consideration." Carlyon testifies to Coleridge's admiration for Wordsworth, saying: "When we have sometimes spoken complimentarily to Coleridge of himself, he has said that he was nothing in comparison with him." The visit to which Carlyon refers must have been very brief, and after it the Wordsworths disappear for about eight weeks.

Considering how many a time in their lives they were seized with a sudden and irresistible impulse to wander, and with almost no baggage, it would not be surprising if they made a long journey; and unless we are to suppose that a date in the Fenwick note to the poem entitled "Stray Pleasures" is incorrect, they ventured into France. In that note the poet is represented to have said to Miss Fenwick, speaking of certain floating mills: "I noticed several upon the river Saône in the year 1799, particularly near the town of Chalons, where my friend Jones and I halted a day when we crossed France."

Coleridge found at Göttingen an agreeable circle of English students, several of whom were Cambridge men. He was known even then as a "noticeable" man, the very adjective that Wordsworth applied to him years afterwards in the stanzas beginning "Within our happy Castle there dwelt One." And even his English companions, Chester, two brothers named Parry, Green, and Clement Carlyon, the last of whom wrote a prolix account of their adventures together, have received from association with him a certain interest for posterity. He was admitted to the society of his professors, and became intimate with at least one German student, a son of Professor Blumenbach. With this young man he made many excursions far and near,

and engaged in endless debates, which usually turned into monologues. As is frequently the case with travellers in their first year abroad, the contrast between foreign ways and the customs of his own country brought out his latent chauvinism. He declaimed against French politics and German religion, even arguing with the celebrated theologian Eichhorn.* Yet though shocked at the neglect of religious worship which prevailed among the students, both English and German, he never went to church, as one of the Cambridge men reports. Walking with his comrades on the well-shaded city wall or tramping through the neighbouring forests, he edified them with long discourses on ecclesiastical history, "gravelled the pastors of the German Church," recited and expounded his own poems, read and showed them his tragedy "Osorio," and in every way, through jest and earnest, played like a magician upon their simpler natures. Coleridge could not be suppressed, but Wordsworth, with those "unseeking manners" of his and that love of quiet, left scarcely a trace of his presence in Goslar. On April 23, 1799, Coleridge wrote to his wife:

"Surely it is unnecessary for me to say how infinitely I languish to be in my native country, and with how many struggles I have remained even so long in Germany! I received your affecting letter, dated Easter Sunday; and had I followed my impulses, I should have packed up and gone with Wordsworth and his sister, who passed through (and only passed through) this place two or three days ago. If they burn with such impatience to return to their native country, *they* who are all to each other, what must I feel with everything pleasant and everything valuable and everything dear to me at a distance—here, where I may truly say my only amusement is—to labour!"

In a letter to Poole, dated May 5, he writes:

"Wordsworth and his sister passed through here, as I have informed you. I walked on with them five English miles, and spent a day with them. They were

* See a letter from one of the Parrys in Carlyon's "Early Years and Late Reflections," I. 100.

melancholy and hypp'd. W. was affected to tears at the thought of not being near me—wished me, of course, to live in the North of England near Sir Frederic Vane's great library. . . . W. was affected to tears, very much affected. But he deemed the vicinity of a library absolutely necessary to his health, nay, to his existence. It is painful to me, too, to think of not living near him: for he is a *good* and *kind* man, and the only one whom in *all* things I feel my superior. . . . I still think Wordsworth will be disappointed in his expectations of relief from reading, without society; and I think it highly probable that where I live there he will live, unless he should find in the North any person, or persons, who can feel with and understand him, can reciprocate and react upon him. My many weaknesses are of some advantage to me; they unite me more with the great mass of my fellow-beings—but dear Wordsworth appears to me to have hurtfully segregated and isolated his being. Doubtless his delights are more deep and sublime, but he has likewise more hours that prey on his flesh and blood."

We have seen that Wordsworth and his sister passed through Göttingen on their way home, about April 20. Where they resided or travelled in the meanwhile, I do not know. In a letter to Thomas Poole, dated July 4, Miss Wordsworth writes:

"We found living in Germany, with the enjoyment of any tolerable advantages, much more expensive than we expected, which determined us to come home with the first tolerable weather of the spring. We left Coleridge and Mr. Chester at Göttingen ten weeks ago, as you probably have heard, and proceeded with as little delay as possible, travelling in a German diligence to Hamburg, whence we went down the Elbe in a boat to Cuxhaven, where we were not detained longer than we wished for our necessary refreshment, and we had an excellent passage to England of two days and nights: We proceeded immediately from Yarmouth into the North, where we are now staying with some of our early friends at a pleasant farm on the banks of the Tees. We are very anxious to hear from Coleridge,—he promised to write us from Göttingen, and though we have written twice we have heard nothing of him."

Clement Carlyon records Coleridge's comings and goings, his excursion to the Brocken in May, his trip to Cassel, his departure for home on June 24, his affectionate references to his wife and children, his expressions of attachment to his country. Coleridge carried out his intention of studying natural history and heard the lectures of Professor Blumenbach on that subject. He also made considerable additions to his knowledge of German literature and German philosophy. But his poetical activities slackened.

Wordsworth, on the contrary, was more productive during the early months of 1799 than at any previous period of equal length. His mind was thrown back upon his own past. He composed several long pieces of blank verse, which he said in after years were intended as part of "The Prelude." It seems more likely that "The Prelude" was not really planned until a year later. These passages of reminiscence sprang spontaneously from his power of living in the past. His gift of observation, which had been cultivated to an almost dangerous point at Alfoxden, was now half dormant. He gave up, for a time, his researches in psychology. The strain of political excitement was relaxed. Coleridge was not with him to stimulate speculation. He was therefore driven to live upon his memories. He wrote that winter the description of skating on Esthwaite, of the boy hooting to the owls across Windermere, of nutting near Hawkshead. Passing over the varied experiences of the past twelve years, he thought of his old schoolmaster and composed the lines beginning "I come, ye little noisy Crew," and "Matthew" and "The Two April Mornings" and "The Fountain." In two instances he followed methods which he had begun to cultivate at Alfoxden: he composed "The Danish Boy," he tells us, "as a prelude to a ballad-poem never written," and a subtle, deeply reflective poem, "Ruth," likewise in ballad form. The latter is a study of moral evil, prompted and mitigated by the influences of natural beauty. The subject is the abandonment of an innocent woman by

her husband, a man of genius and charm. Wild nature, amid whose glories he had roved, made this man indifferent to human feeling and to moral obligation. But to the heart-broken Ruth, nature, with grand impartiality, gave solace in her years of sorrow.

It is a curious theme, and as Wordsworthian as any detail of its treatment. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge applied themselves more than once to the study of seduction. The latter had already written his three poems to Unfortunate Women—"Pale roamer through the night! thou poor Forlorn!" "Maiden, that with sullen brow," and "Myrtle-leaf that, ill besped." There are many points of similarity between Wordsworth's two poems, "The Thorn" and "The Mad Mother," written in 1798, and "Ruth," written early in 1799, the most obvious being that in all of them the poet shows profound sympathy with minds disordered by betrayal, and profound knowledge, too, of the workings of such minds. In the ruin of the faculties which once adapted these poor women to social life, they have preserved, he shows us, a healthful relation to nature. Upon nature they fall back for consolation when hopes of human love have failed. Not quite the same subject, but one very much like it, had engaged his attention in "The Ruined Cottage." This is also true of "The Borderers." The material for "Vaudracour and Julia," although it may not have received substantial form until 1805, was supplied to him in 1792. It, again, is a tale of thwarted love, ending in separation and madness. Wordsworth rarely trusted himself to describe the effects of the passion of love. He knew too well the intensity of his own nature, and feared the result of any slackening of self-control; and of minds abnormal or perverted, or threatened at least with insanity, he had known only too many among his nearest associates.

At Goslar he wrote also that unique ballad, "Lucy Gray." It was founded, he informs us, on a circumstance told him by his sister. Nothing could surpass the simplicity and naturalness of this poem before the next to the last stanza is reached. At that point the

suggestion of something preternatural is made, yet without disturbing the sense of reality. This touch is added with marvellous delicacy. The poet was prepared to make it by those studies of the weird which he and Coleridge had pursued at Alfoxden. "Lucy Gray" is a more perfect example of its kind than any other of Wordsworth's contributions to "Lyrical Ballads." His creative energy here, for the first time perhaps, worked through a medium of pure imagination, and on an impulse purely artistic.

"A Poet's Epitaph," dated 1799, is another instance of Wordsworth's rapidly unfolding versatility. The first half of this piece is in a vein of high moral satire—a vein not previously revealed in him; a reader who came upon it unawares might say, "This is by Burns or else by some poet born two or three generations after Burns." On the other hand, the five stanzas beginning

> But who is He, with modest looks,

which describe the true poet's gifts and limitations, though transcending in boldness and precision any lines previously written by Wordsworth, possess qualities which are immediately recognized as peculiar to him.

The five so-called "Lucy poems," which Wordsworth stated were written in Germany, fill one of the most entrancing pages in our literature. Lovely in themselves, they gain an added interest from the questionings they raise in the mind of every thoughtful reader. Have the poems all one subject? Was Lucy a real person or a creature of imagination? Who was she? What passion and what pain do these lines half confess and half conceal? To say much about them would be to desecrate their tender and exquisite beauty. No lover of poetry would wish to resolve all their mystery. Yet one is obliged to take account of several views which have been held in regard to their meaning. The traditional opinion is that they were inspired by the poet's love for his sister. When we recall the ecstatic language in which she more than once voiced her yearn-

ing for him in absence, and how her solicitude hovered over him and lapped him in tenderness when she had regained him, we must admit that if his nature was like hers, this view is not untenable. As we have seen, it is the only guess that Coleridge could make when he read the "sublime epitaph," "A slumber did my spirit seal." Another view is that this Lucy is as purely an ideal creation as the child in his ballad. In that case, we must believe these poems little less than miracles. Taken together, they are unsurpassed for poignancy of passion. The love of woman never inspired utterance more tenderly reverent. If they had no origin in personal experience, we must reckon Wordsworth among the greatest objective or dramatic artists. A third view is the only one which an unprejudiced reading of the poems alone would be likely to suggest: that the poet had loved and lost. From every indication, of feeling, of musical tone, and even of metrical detail, the five pieces, "Strange fits of passion have I known," "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," "I travelled among unknown men," "A slumber did my spirit seal," and "Three years she grew in sun and shower," appear to have one and the same subject. And, in spite of Fenwick notes and all other external testimony, I am half convinced that the two pieces, "I met Louisa in the shade," and "Dear Child of Nature, let them rail," were conceived at the same time and from the same impulse as "Three years she grew in sun and shower." All attempts to look more closely into the secret have thus far been made in vain. Lucy turned her wheel "beside an English fire"; the "springs of Dove" are in England: yet when could the poet, without the knowledge of his friends, have met and so deeply loved a young English girl? Brief must the vision have been, brief and eternal as the moment in Dante's life where *incipit Vita Nova.* My own opinion is that an actual experience of love and sorrow, quite definite and personal, was the origin of these poems, and that the traits of a real woman, her loveliness, her innocent wildness, were fondly recalled under the name of "Lucy."

But the name, I believe, and the several touches of local detail, have slight significance, if any.

When Wordsworth and his sister passed through Göttingen in April, 1799, they had been more than seven months abroad. Their experiences had not been altogether satisfactory. Accustomed to the soft winters of England, they had suffered much from cold, and, unfortunately, did not wait to see a German May steal through the sweet valleys of the Harz. There is no evidence that they acquired any sympathetic knowledge of German life or an intimate acquaintance with the language. They lived very economically, spending far less than Coleridge. For more than six months after returning to England they were without a home or any distinct prospects for the future.

Wordsworth returned to England with no abatement of his democratic principles, and both he and Dorothy avoided the older generation of their family. She wrote to Poole on July 4, giving their address as "Mr. Hutchinson's, Sockburn, near Northallerton, Yorkshire." They are undetermined, she says, where to reside, and have no house in view. William wishes to be near a good library, and, if possible, in a pleasant country. She asks Poole to let them know if he hears of a suitable place in his neighbourhood.

Wordsworth wrote anxiously to Cottle about the sale of "Lyrical Ballads." His first letter, undated, was probably written late in May, for he says, "We left Coleridge well at Göttingen a month ago." He does not know that Cottle has transferred the book to Arch. "We have spent our time pleasantly enough in Germany," he declares, "but we are right glad to find ourselves in England, for we have learned to know its value."

By June 2 he had heard from Cottle, and expressed his regret at having lost a good opportunity of connecting himself with the publisher Johnson, in whose hands the poems were likely to have had a quicker sale. Cottle was going out of business, and the author desired to know who was to own the copyright. He was in

need of money, and asked for the balance due to him. In a letter of June 24, he makes the astounding statement:

"From what I can gather it seems that The Ancyent Marinere has, on the whole, been an injury to the volume; I mean that the old words and the strangeness of it have deterred readers from going on. If the volume should come to a second edition, I would put in its place some little things which would be more likely to suit the common taste."

Nothing is said about how Coleridge might feel if this were done. One cannot imagine the author of the "Ancient Mariner" making such a proposal with reference to the "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" or "The Idiot Boy." No doubt it was based upon an agreement between the two poets; yet one could wish for a more generous way of putting things.

"Lyrical Ballads" had not been badly received. The challenge of its Advertisement had fallen almost unheard in a noisy world. There were few to remark the truth and the audacity of the now famous declaration:

"The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title."

But there had been one article, which, though not likely to harm the fortunes of the book, was manifestly intended to rebuke the authors. It appeared in *The Critical Review* for October, 1798, and was written by Southey. Its appearance so soon after the publication of the book has given very plausible ground to the opinion that he planned his attack before he saw it,

and he has even been charged with persuading Cottle to transfer it to Arch, in order not to include the former in the ruin he intended to make. It has also been suggested that he thought Coleridge was the author of all the poems. His review was certainly neither kind nor fair. He had had many an opportunity of realizing the inferiority of his own genius to that or either one of the joint authors. Only the shallowest self-conceit could have enabled him to brush aside lightly any poetic theory that they might propound. "Of these experimental poems, the most important," he says, "is the Idiot Boy, the story of which is simply this"—and he goes on to anatomize it. It is easy enough to raise a laugh over the "story" of this poem, and over some of the phrases in it, that are so simple as to appear grotesque. But he might have found so much to praise! Instead of this, after quoting some of the most "childish" stanzas, he magisterially pronounces his verdict:

"No tale less deserved the labour that appears to have been bestowed upon this. It resembles a Flemish picture in the worthlessness of its design and the excellence of its execution. From Flemish artists we are satisfied with such pieces: who would not have lamented, if Corregio or Rafaelle had wasted their talents in painting Dutch boors or the humours of a Flemish wake?"

He is altogether displeased with "The Thorn." Of the "Ancient Mariner" he complains that, though many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful, they are in connection absurd or unintelligible. "We do not," he says, "sufficiently understand the story to analyze it." It is strange that a man with any claim to be a poet should entertain the distressing thought of analyzing the "Ancient Mariner"; and there could be nothing more inept than to describe it as "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity." Finally, he condescends to admit that "genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit." Curiously enough, he approves of "The Female Vagrant," and he gives high praise to the "Lines Written above Tintern Abbey." He laments that the author stooped to write such pieces as "The

Last of the Flock," "The Convict," and most of the ballads. There is an intolerable air of superiority in his concluding paragraph: "The 'experiment,' we think, has failed, not because the language of conversation is little adapted to 'the purposes of poetic pleasure,' but because it has been tried upon uninteresting subjects. Yet every piece discovers genius, and ill as the author has frequently employed his talents, they certainly rank him with the best of living poets."

Charles Lamb, though he had too readily sided with Lloyd in his quarrel with Coleridge, was disappointed with Southey's article. He thought it unappreciative, and told him so: "If you wrote that review in 'Crit. Rev.,' I am sorry you are so sparing of praise to the 'Ancient Marinere.'" He also declares "Tintern Abbey" one of the finest poems ever written.

Wordsworth felt the blow more deeply than he would admit. He pretended to care only because the criticism must affect the sale of the book. He exclaims, in a letter to Cottle: "He knew that I published those poems for money, and money alone. He knew that money was of importance to me. If he could not conscientiously have spoken differently of the volume, he ought to have declined the task of reviewing it."

According to Cottle's account, Wordsworth ascribed the bad sale of "Lyrical Ballads" to two causes—"first the 'Ancient Mariner,' which, he said, no one seemed to understand; and, secondly, the unfavourable notice of most of the reviews." Considering that the authors had disposed of their copyright, we might wonder why Wordsworth should be so anxious about the money loss, did we not also learn from Cottle that the latter had obtained ownership once more of what was regarded as a worthless property, and then given it to Wordsworth, "so that whatever advantage has arisen, subsequently, from the sale of this volume of the 'Lyrical Ballads' . . . has pertained exclusively to Mr. W."

Mrs. Coleridge, reflecting, no doubt, her brother-in-law's opinion, wrote to Poole from Bristol, in March,

1799: "The Lyrical Ballads are laughed at and disliked by all with very few exceptions"; and again, on April 2: "The Lyrical Ballads are not liked at all by any." She also added, in a queer little postscript: "It is very unpleasant to me to be often asked if Coleridge has changed his political sentiments, for I know not properly how to reply. Pray furnish me."

The little book was noticed at some length in *The Monthly Review* for June, 1799, and on the whole unfavourably. Wordsworth did not see this article until several weeks later, but he heard of it. The anonymous writer divided his blame and his even more offensive condescension equally between the poems by Wordsworth and those by Coleridge. He supposed, of course, that they were all written by the same author. He sees in their natural diction only an imitation of an ancient and rude style of ballad verse. In their spirit he detects a dangerous radicalism, the teaching of Rousseau. The "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is "the strangest story of a cock and a bull that we ever saw on paper." "The Yew-tree" seems a seat for Jean-Jacques. "The Female Vagrant" "seems to stamp a general stigma on all military transactions," and the perception of this truth sets the reviewer off on a defence of the supposed necessity of militarism. "In 'The Dungeon,' candour and tenderness for criminals seem pushed to excess," and with a Tory's traditional solicitude for low "rates," the reviewer inquires: "Have not jails been built on the humane Mr. Howard's plan, which have almost ruined some counties, and which look more like palaces than habitations for the perpetrators of crimes?" "The Convict" shows "misplaced commiseration, on one condemned by the laws of his country." This article, like almost everything else published in *The Monthly Review* in the last decade of the eighteenth century, indicates the general alertness to detect and crush all manifestations of the "levelling" spirit. One cannot say that its author was blind to the merits of the book, nor indeed that he was mistaken in thinking he had discovered one of the chief motives of its composition.

Why did not Wordsworth boldly accept the challenge? Apart from the supposition—for which we have up to this point seen no evidence—that his political philosophy had already begun to change to a more conservative type, there were reasons inherent in his character. Wordsworth was not one of those men who enjoy combat. Only a self-distrusting or excessively prudent young man could have suppressed, as he did, the Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff. The manifold impressions made upon him by his close view of the French Revolution he kept to himself for many years, and the reception of "Lyrical Ballads," which was, after all, only what might have been expected, made him write timorously to Cottle: "My aversion from publication increases every day, so much so, that no motives whatever, nothing but pecuniary necessity, will, I think, ever prevail upon me to commit myself to the press again.'

CHAPTER XIII

GRASMERE AND THE LAKES

THE reader may have been struck more than once in this recital with the long visits Wordsworth made at the houses of his friends. There must have been something peculiarly engaging in his person and his conversation, or he would not have been so often invited to spend weeks and even months with people upon whom he had no claim of kinship. His needs were simple, his habits accommodating, and he spent much of his time out of doors. We have also to remember that the eighteenth century was more leisurely than our own time, and that, owing to the lack of facilities for rapid travel, well-to-do families living at a distance from great centres might often say with truth that the advantage of entertaining was theirs. Guests broke the monotony, and gave young men and women a chance to see someone besides their own relatives. The Hutchinsons, with whom William and Dorothy Wordsworth made their home for nearly eight months in 1799, at Sockburn, were certainly not more than well-to-do, and it is quite possible that the guests, in this case, paid for board and lodging. The family consisted of three brothers—Henry, a sailor; Thomas, a farmer, about twenty-six years old; and George—and three sisters—Mary, Sarah, and Joanna, aged respectively twenty-eight, twenty-four, and nineteen. They had spent part of their childhood at Penrith, where the acquaintance with the Wordsworths had begun. Thomas, at the age of sixteen, had inherited the stock on a farm at Sockburn, which is in the county of Durham, near the border of Yorkshire, about seven miles south of Darlington. He now rented this farm, and his sisters lived with him there. It was a pleasant place, on the banks of the

River Tees. The young people were nearly of an age. They had known one another from childhood. Mary Hutchinson, as we have seen, had gone to visit Dorothy Wordsworth at Racedown—a long and tedious journey.

There are few traces in his poems of Wordsworth's life at Sockburn. Nearly all the short pieces which he dated 1799 were composed before he left Germany. The Bishop of Lincoln quotes two letters from Coleridge,* which show that Wordsworth had already communicated to his friend the great plan which now filled his mind. Coleridge was to be addressed in a poem. But there was to be another and greater poem, a life-work, a masterpiece, and with characteristic self-forgetfulness, he entreats Wordsworth to attend chiefly to this task. The first of these letters is of the utmost importance, as being perhaps the seed from which grew more than one book of "The Excursion," and as defining Coleridge's state of mind, and perhaps Wordsworth's too, with reference to what we may term the Revolutionary faith. This letter is said to have been addressed to Wordsworth in the summer of 1799. It says:

"My dear Friend,—I do entreat you to go on with 'The Recluse'; and I wish you would write a poem in blank verse, addressed to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes*. It would do great good, and might form a part of 'The Recluse,' for in my present mood I am wholly against the publication of any small poems."

This is not the language of a man who has himself given up striving for his old ideals, and we know what they were. And this we may hold, notwithstanding a manuscript Discourse by Coleridge, now in the British

* "Memoirs," I. 159. There is, besides, a letter from Coleridge to Poole, in the British Museum, written at Exeter, September 10, 1799, in which Coleridge says: "I have heard from W. Wordsworth. He is ill, and seems not happy. Montague has played the fool, I expect, with him in pecuniary affairs. He renounces Alfoxden altogether."

Museum, in which he criticizes the Godwinian theories, though without naming their author. He denounces naked reason and exalts the affections, and speaks of "infidelity and its almost inseparable concomitant, relaxation of domestic ties," quite in the vein of pulpit thunderers. But the real nature of the discourse is shown by the superscription: "Written for whom I neither know or care, as a College Commemoration Sermon, Oct. 6, 1799." It was evidently composed for sale to some not very scrupulous clergyman. Under date of October 8, 1799, at Stowey, the ingenious author has added, below the title, that though one side is "all too hugely beangel'd, the other all too desperately bedevil'd, yet spite of the flattery and spite of the caricature, both are likenesses."

In the second letter, dated October 12, Coleridge says:

"I long to see what you have been doing. O let it be the tail-piece of 'The Recluse!' for of nothing but 'The Recluse' can I hear patiently. That it is to be addressed to me makes me more desirous that it should not be a poem of itself. To be addressed, as a beloved man, by a thinker, at the close of such a poem as 'The Recluse,' a poem *non unius populi*, is the only event, I believe, capable of inciting in me an hour's vanity—vanity, nay, it is too good a feeling to be so called; it would indeed be a self-elevation produced *ab extra*."

Coleridge had evidently not yet seen even the beginning of "The Prelude," and thought of it as a slight undertaking compared with "The Recluse"—as a sort of dedication to himself of that larger work. Wordsworth, we may suppose from these incitements, was going on with the task he had begun to plan in Germany, writing "The Prelude," and looking ahead to what afterwards he called "The Excursion."

In a letter dated September 2 he invited Cottle to join him in the north, and accompany him on a tour, which was to include the curiosities in the neighbourhood of Sockburn, and then Cumberland and Westmorland. By curiosities he means natural objects of interest. As at Orleans what he thought most worthy of

record was a bubbling spring, so here, he cared more for waterfalls, gorges, peaks, and dales, than for the works of man. Coleridge had come back from Germany in July, and the visit was deferred until he could be of the party. He was in poor health, suffering terribly from rheumatism, sleeplessness, and indigestion, and probably aggravating these evils with opium. The problem of supporting his family was crying for solution. He naturally went first to Stowey, not only to comfort his wife, but to receive comfort himself from the ever-helpful Poole. Here he and Southey patched up their broken friendship. Towards the end of August the Coleridges went to Ottery St. Mary, where old Mrs. Coleridge and her son George, a clergyman, were living. In October Coleridge turned up in Bristol, and induced Cottle to accompany him to the north to see Wordsworth. They arrived at Sockburn on October 26.

In a letter from Wordsworth to his sister, we have a summary account of the journey taken by the young men. Cottle dropped out at Greta Bridge, before they were fairly started. John Wordsworth took his place, at Temple Sowerby. The party then, entering the Lake country at Bampton, proceeded along Hawes Water, and crossed the mountains to Windermere, by way of Long Sleddale and Troutbeck. They went over to Hawkshead. The brothers noticed great changes among the people since they had left the region. It was Coleridge's first visit. Next day they went through Rydal to Grasmere, where they remained a few days. John left them almost immediately. They climbed with him to the top of Grisedale Pass, and said farewell in sight of Ullswater. "Coleridge," says William, "was much struck with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. I have much to say to you. You will think my plan a mad one, but I have thought of building a house there by the lake side. John will give me £40 to buy the ground. There is a small house at Grasmere empty, which, perhaps, we may take; but of this we will speak." The two poets lingered in these lovely places until November 15 at least.

On the 10th, writing to Southey from Keswick, Coleridge says: "I was called up to the North by alarming accounts of Wordsworth's health, which, thank God, are but little more than alarms." He states further that he intends to return thence to London, having received by accident, in the Lake country, "a sort of offer of an agreeable kind," which will enable him and his wife to live in London four or five months. This was a proposal from Daniel Stuart to write political articles for *The Morning Post*. He first returned, however, to Sockburn, and went thence by coach to London, arriving November 27.

Wordsworth seems to have remained longer in the Lake country, for, writing to Coleridge several weeks later, he says: "I arrived at Sockburn the day after you quitted it. I scarcely know whether to be sorry or not that you were no longer there, as it would have been a great pain to me to have parted with you. I was sadly disappointed in not finding Dorothy. Mary was a solitary housekeeper and overjoyed to see me."

Wordsworth and Coleridge spent nearly a month together, on this tour, in the closest intercourse, renewing their old love and rekindling the flame of poetic inspiration, which, in Wordsworth's case at least, was soon to glow more brightly than ever. It was one more of those epochs of his life, like the old Alfoxden days, when his heart grew strong with faith in his own powers, and his mind opened to fresh influences. He was subject to great physical and mental depression; composition exhausted him; the physical act of writing made him ill; if left long to himself, he doubted his own powers. Many of the poems he composed during that lonely winter in Germany have a strange inwardness, approaching melancholy. On his return he betrayed undue concern about the success of "Lyrical Ballads," amounting almost to petulance. There is evidence that he was distressed for want of money. Basil Montagu appears to have been remiss in paying for his son's expenses.

All these clouds were blown away when Coleridge burst upon him like a riotous wind. His courage re-

vived. He took a larger view of his future tasks. When alone with Dorothy, he observed and penetrated the minute particulars of nature. With Coleridge to stimulate his synthetic powers, he saw things in their connection with one another. Even had it not been Coleridge, with his iridescent imagination, but only some ordinary disciple of Kant, the contact would have been invigorating, for analysis had gone to an almost perilous length, and the time had come when a fresh speculative impulse was needed, a fresh impulse to synthesize, to view nature and mind under the aspect of their eternal coexistence.

It must have given him great satisfaction to draw together so many of the best influences of his past life. First there was the group at Sockburn; then, with his best friend at his side, he listened once more to the voices of the hills. Coleridge, too, heard these voices with a sympathetic ear. He wrote to Dorothy from Keswick:

"You can feel, what I cannot express for myself, how deeply I have been impressed by a world of scenery absolutely new to me. At Rydal and Grasmere I received, I think, the deepest delight; yet Haweswater, through many a varying view, kept my eyes dim with tears; and, the evening approaching, Derwent-water in diversity of harmonious features, in the majesty of its beauties, and in the beauty of its majesty . . . and the black crags close under the snowy mountains, whose snows were pinkish with the setting sun, and the reflections from the rich clouds that floated over some and rested upon others!—it was to me a vision of a fair country: why were you not with us?"

And of John Wordsworth, the sailor brother, he wrote: "Your brother John is one of you; a man who hath solitary usings of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle tact, a swift instinct of truth and beauty: he interests me much."

Having made the happy choice of a home at Grasmere, Wordsworth and his sister remained only about three weeks longer at Sockburn. They set out for their new abode on December 17, and reached Grasmere on the 20th, sleeping on the way at Askrigg, Sedbergh, and

Kendal. Starting early in the morning, and crossing the Tees in the Sockburn fields by moonlight, they travelled as far as Wensley Dale on horseback, Dorothy mounted "behind George." They rode ten miles to the River Swale, four more to Richmond, and eight more into Wensley Dale, where they parted from their friends with sorrowful hearts. Thence they proceeded on foot to Askrigg, twelve miles, which they reached before six o'clock in the evening. The rough, frozen roads hurt their feet, but the keen air refreshed their spirits, and they were able to walk twenty-one miles next day, with the help of a "lift" in a cart. Notwithstanding a furious wind and snow, they turned aside to see several waterfalls. From Askrigg to Sedbergh they flew before the gale at a rapid pace. Next morning they climbed uphill and down, eleven miles, to Kendal, where they spent the afternoon buying and ordering furniture. On the fourth day, in a post-chaise, they proceeded less lightly to Grasmere. In the fragment of "The Recluse," written a year or two later, the poet thus describes the arrival:

> Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak,
> When hitherward we journeyed, side by side,
> Through bursts of sunshine and through flying showers,
> Paced the long Vales—how long they were—and yet
> How fast that length of way was left behind,
> Wensley's rich Vale and Sedbergh's naked heights.
> The frosty wind, as if to make amends
> For its keen breath, was aiding to our steps,
> And drove us onward like two ships at sea,
> Or like two birds, companions in mid air,
> Parted and reunited by the blast.
> Stern was the face of Nature. We rejoiced
> In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew
> A feeling of their strength. The naked trees,
> The icy brooks, as on we passed, appeared
> To question us. "Whence come ye ? to what end ?"
> They seemed to say; "What would ye," said the shower,
> "Wild wanderers, whither through my dark domain ?"
> The sunbeam said, "Be happy." When this Vale
> We entered, bright and solemn was the sky
> That faced us with a passionate welcoming,
> And led us to our threshold.

Travel-stained and footsore, but full of joy at the new prospect opening before them, this young man and this young woman, whether they realized it or not, were come at last to the haven where they would be. At Grasmere and in its neighbourhood they were to spend the rest of their days. Henceforth they were nevermore to be separated. Here, in perfect union of effort, they were to live according to their ideal. Peace, contentment, unforced and fruitful labour, were to be their portion. Their lives up to this point had not been unfortunate, but they had suffered much anxiety, and William, at least, was one of those who bore the burden of the century at heart. They had wandered far, in body and in spirit, and not the least of their new advantages was being at home again among their native hills. Their genius dedicated them peculiarly to the study and love of nature. That "thrifty goddess" reveals herself at her own chosen moments, and must be waited for and waylaid. Restless and wandering lovers miss her disclosures. At Grasmere, William and Dorothy Wordsworth could at once begin again the life of observation and emotion which in his case at least had been so full during childhood and youth. They were within one long day's walk of Cockermouth, where they were born, and at an equal distance from Penrith. An easy ramble of three hours would bring them to Hawkshead. The familiar rustic speech of the northwest would be heard again, made noticeable and yet endeared by absence. The local types of face and figure, local customs, local traditions, would stir the heart with tender memories, and at the same time yield fresh meaning, after years spent elsewhere.*

The house that Wordsworth had rented was a small stone-and-plaster cottage several hundred feet back

* In a letter to Poole, preserved in the British Museum, Coleridge about this time says: "I would to God I could get Wordsworth to retake Alfoxden. The society of so great a being is of priceless value; but he will never quit the North of England. His habits are more assimilated with the inhabitants there; there he and his sister are exceedingly beloved, enthusiastically. Such differences do small sympathies make, such as voice, pronunciation, etc."

DOVE COTTAGE FROM THE FRONT

From a photograph by Walmsley

from the north-east shore of Grasmere Lake.* It had an unobstructed view of the water, and of Silver How and Loughrigg Fell beyond. Before it ran the old road that connected Grasmere village and Ambleside. Immediately behind it rose the first slopes of Rydal Fell, which is a spur of mighty Fairfield. Along the margin of the lake, on the one hand, extended a large grove of oak-trees; on the other, a few level enclosures of meadowland stretched for somewhat less than half a mile to the ancient church and the first dwellings of the village. The cottage was rough-cast with white lime, and gleamed hospitably upon the sight of a traveller approaching it from Kendal and Windermere. It had formerly been an inn, The Dove and Olive Branch, and is now known as Dove Cottage. The Wordsworths, however, spoke of it for some years as Town-end, which was the local name. It was even smaller than at present. De Quincey describes the interior as he saw it in 1807:

"A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen long, and twelve broad; very prettily wainscoted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year with roses, and in the summer and autumn with a profusion of jasmine and other fragrant shrubs. . . . I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little drawing-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fireplace of this room as his

Half-kitchen and half-parlour fire.

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and, in other respects, pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps three hundred volumes, which seemed to consecrate the room as the poet's study and composing room; and such occasionally it was."

* According to a manuscript note by Dr. Joseph Hunter, in the British Museum, the rental was £8 a year.

Besides these two fair-sized rooms, which looked towards the highway and the lake, there were, on the ground-floor, a bedroom and a little dark kitchen or laundry, and on the upper floor one or two bedrooms, and a diminutive study or sitting-room. There were a few feet of ground in front, between the cottage and the road. At the back was a steep little orchard. Between its piled rocks a few apple-trees shaded a tiny spring. Shrubs and flowers growing at the higher end of the orchard laughed in at the upper windows of the cottage, so small was the space and so sharp the pitch of the ground. Beyond the back wall rose the mountain, and one might continue in a straight line for half a day without encountering any other habitation. For those who have never been in the Lake country, it may not be amiss to say that the valleys are very small, seldom more than a few fields across, and carefully cultivated, while the mountains that divide them are high in comparison, their lower slopes often richly wooded, their upper flanks generally bare of trees, and covered with close elastic turf, while their summits are composed of jagged rocks. More than a score of lovely lakes and romantic tarns lie bosomed in the vales or set like jewels among the hills. The entire region is so small that from Grasmere as a centre a good walker can reach any point on its circumference in a day. Yet it is so diversified and so full of exquisite detail, that a lifetime would not suffice to acquaint a person with all its natural beauties. These are in no small measure due to the enormous rainfall, which keeps the water-courses shouting all the year round, and causes grass and moss to clothe every rock and tree-trunk with verdure.

The influx of tourists had just begun, and was not very large. Only a small part of the population was as yet composed of wealthy retired families. Grasmere itself was a scattered group of humble cottages. There were almost none beside the lake except Wordsworth's. In deeper seclusion in the valley heads, such as Easedale and Langdale, folk still lived oblivious of the outer

world, preserving ancient manners and forms of speech. On all the long stretch of road, seventeen miles or so, between Ambleside and Keswick, there appear to have been at first only two or three households with whom the new-comers could associate on something like an equal footing in the matter of education. But they probably did not consider this a drawback. The dalesmen were a respectable, intelligent, neighbourly race; the state of society was wholesome; there were other planes of intercourse no less inviting than those afforded by learning and polite convention.

At first the new inhabitants of Town-end, or Dove Cottage, probably lived more simply than even they had ever done before. They had few possessions; it was no easy matter to go to Kendal or Penrith for supplies; of money they had at this juncture almost none. Yet on Christmas Eve Wordsworth sat down, in a most cheerful frame of mind, and wrote a long letter to Coleridge. The house, he said, was almost empty, but they hoped to make it comfortable. They had caught colds, to be sure, and the chimneys drew badly, but there was compensation in planning for next spring. His sister was especially pleased with the orchard: "In imagination she has already built a seat, with a summer shed, on the highest platform in this our little domestic slip of mountain. The spot commands a view, over our house, of the lake, the church, Helmcrag, and two-thirds of the vale." He intends to enclose the two or three yards of ground between the house and the road, and to plant flowers there. "Am I fanciful," he asks, "when I would extend the obligation of gratitude to insensate things? May not a man have a solitary pleasure in doing something gratuitously for the sake of his house, as for an individual to which he owes so much?" They intend to keep no servant, but have engaged a woman to do some of the housework by the day. He says they have found the people in the neighbouring cottages "uniformly kind-hearted, frank, and manly, prompt to serve, without servility." He hopes for skating on Rydal Water, and has begun the com-

position of a new poem, on some subject already discussed with Coleridge.

The year 1800 was one of the most prolific of all Wordsworth's years. In it he probably finished and dictated to Dorothy the first and second books of "The Prelude," besides composing that great fragment of "The Recluse," which was not published in full until 1888, and many other poems, inspired by his new surroundings, among them "The Brothers," "Michael," and "The Pet Lamb." It is pleasant to observe that he, who had been the recipient of much hospitality, proved hospitable himself as soon as he had a home to offer to his kindred and friends. His brother John, the sailor, spent a large part of this year with him. Coleridge, too, was more than once a guest at Dove Cottage in 1800. He had gone, as we have seen, from Sockburn to London, where he arrived November 27, and settled with his family. For nearly three months he wrote for Stuart's paper, *The Morning Post.* He then gave up his engagement, in order to work at his translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein." In February Mrs. Coleridge and their son Hartley left London, and Coleridge spent a month, perhaps two months, with the Lambs. From their house Coleridge wrote to Poole, in March: "Certainly no one, neither you or the Wedgwoods, although you far more than anyone else, ever entered into the feelings due to a man like Wordsworth, of whom I do not hesitate in saying that, since Milton, no one has *manifested* himself equal to him."

He wrote to Josiah Wedgwood, on April 21, from Dove Cottage again: "To-morrow morning I send off the last sheet of my irksome, soul-wearying labour, the translation of Schiller"; and on May 21 he wrote from Poole's house to Godwin: "I left Wordsworth on the 4th of this month; if I cannot procure a suitable house at Stowey, I return to Cumberland and settle at Keswick." Campbell states that no house being procurable at Stowey, Coleridge "took his wife and child to Dove Cottage," where they all remained "from the 29th June until the 24th July, when they moved into Great

Hall," at Keswick. During part of this visit Coleridge was ill, with what he described as rheumatic fever, but notwithstanding every disability, he was again braced by contact with Wordsworth. It was comparatively easy for him to begin great undertakings anywhere; under Wordsworth's influence he sometimes brought them to a successful conclusion. In September, 1800, he wrote to Humphry Davy (?) from Keswick: "I abandon poetry altogether. I leave the higher and deeper kinds to Wordsworth, the delightful, popular, and simply dignified to Southey, and reserve for myself the honourable attempt to make others feel and understand their writings, as they deserve to be felt and understood."

It was an occasion of reverent delight when Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, the poet's grandson, placed in my hand the little account-books which contain Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal. She is to me the most delightful, the most fascinating woman who has enriched literary history. Poetry owes to her more than it owes to any other person who was not actually a great poet. Had Petrarch not met Laura, he might, one feels, have sung another woman's praise. We shall never know how much of Dante's Beatrice was pure abstraction. Dorothy Wordsworth was to her brother not only an inspiration, but a helper in many ways. Her love and solicitude followed everywhere the hesitating steps of Coleridge, and what she was to him one can hardly venture to surmise. Her Grasmere Journal is full of incomplete poetry, the star-dust of poetry still unpolarized, pollen of the flowering fields, a something midway between daily experience and immortal art. The first entry is dated May 14, 1800. It is evident from the very first page that the idyll of Racedown and Alfoxden still goes on unbroken, the same enthusiastic devotion to her brother, the same exact and loving study of nature, the same sense of being in a fresh, wonderful world. Yet a shadow appears to have fallen across her happy spirit, causing tears, but no complaints. She begins to write on a day when William has left her to return to Mary Hutchinson in Yorkshire. She is too

brave to make a confidant even of her diary, but loneliness no doubt drove her to write: "Wm. and John set off into Yorkshire. . . . My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to W. when I gave him a farewell kiss. I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, and after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me, I knew not why, dull and melancholy, and the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound. . . . The valley very green; many sweet views up to Rydale, when I could juggle away the fine houses; but they disturbed me, even more than when I have been happier. . . . I resolved to write a journal of the time, till W. and J. return, and I set about keeping my resolve, because I will not quarrel with myself, and because I shall give William pleasure by it when he comes home again. . . . Oh, that I had a letter from William!"

The next day she writes, after a solitary ramble round the lake, at the foot of Loughrigg Fell: "Grasmere very solemn in the last glimpse of twilight. It calls home the heart to quietness. I had been very melancholy. In my walk back I had many of my saddest thoughts, and I could not keep the tears within me. But when I came to Grasmere, I felt that it did me good. I finished my letter to M. H."—*i.e.*, to Mary Hutchinson. *It calls home the heart to quietness.* Was not she, too, a poet?

Within the next few days she read several plays of Shakespeare and some ballads, worked busily in house and garden, listened sympathetically to tales of woe from poor travellers, watched closely the varying stages of the season, and, above all, waited for letters. Her walks never took her far from the cottage, especially as the time drew near when William might possibly return. She would rather sacrifice the glory of the long summer twilights than fail to be at home to greet him if he came unannounced. She wrote to her brothers Christopher and William, to the Hutchinsons, to Coleridge, to Charles Lloyd. She fell in love with the lower end of Easedale and the rocky knoll of Butterlip How, and spent much

time sitting there and on the slopes beside Rydal Water. Once, upon the side of Loughrigg, her heart, she says, dissolved in what she saw. On Wednesday, June 4, 1800, she writes: "I lingered out of doors in the hope of hearing my brother's tread." On Friday, hurrying home at night from the post-office at Ambleside, "I slackened my pace," she says, "as I came near home, fearing to hear that he was not come. I listened till after one o'clock to every barking dog." Next day: "I did not leave home, in the expectation of Wm. and John, and sitting at work till after 11 o'clock I heard a foot at the front of the house, turn round, and open the gate. It was William! After our first joy was over we got some tea. We did not go to bed till 4 o'clock in the morning, so he had an opportunity of seeing our improvements."

Perhaps it was during this absence that Wordsworth became engaged to Mary Hutchinson, though the subject is never directly mentioned. Coleridge had been more or less expected for some time, and the uncertainty continued till June 29. John Wordsworth came home a day later than William. We hear no more of sadness. It is refreshing to read of the poet fishing, setting pike floats, and cutting down a tree, and notable indeed is the information that "Wm. stuck peas." The nebular stuff of a poem is in Dorothy's elaborate account of "a very tall woman, tall much beyond the measure of tall women," whose children begged and told a lie, and whom she saw again, "creeping with a beggar's complaining foot." It is evident she is treasuring up all the details of the story and all the effective terms of speech that occur to her, as material for a poem, and nearly two years later, when her brother wrote "Beggars," he used this material. Such culled terms as "the whining voice of sorrow" and "creeping with a beggar's complaining foot" show that she had lately been reading the old dramatists, and are evidences of an effort on her part; but generally the charm of her phrases springs from their simplicity. The deep calm of her happiness sometimes changed to a more tumultuous joy, an ecstasy

of feeling. This she nearly always condensed into a sentence or two; for example, "Grasmere looked so beautiful that my heart was almost melted away."

But her usefulness to her brother was not limited to the higher offices of comforter, counsellor, provider, and critic. She had already begun her lifelong occupation of copying his poems. The ordinary domestic cares—housekeeping, cooking, mending, papering rooms, gardening, etc.—sat lightly on her. What there was to do she did, but had plenty of time to spare for reading and walking. Seven months slipped away before they unpacked their "Somersetshire goods."

At the end of July, Coleridge came over from Keswick for a short visit, bringing the second volume of Southey's "Annual Anthology," which contained a number of his own poems. He had been able to keep away just one week. The men went to bathe, and afterwards they all sailed on the lake, letting the boat take its own course while they read poetry. Wordsworth appears to have been stimulated by the presence of Coleridge to finish "The Brothers," one of the most ambitious poems he had hitherto written, and one which most daringly exemplifies his own theories. It was his habit, as is well known, to compose while walking in the open air, and he retained hundreds of lines in his mind, often for many weeks, before they were completed. On Friday, August 1, the day after Coleridge came, Dorothy writes: "In the morning I copied The Brothers. Coleridge and Wm. went down to the lake. They returned, and we all went together to Mary Point [so named in honour of Mary Hutchinson], where we sate in the breeze, and the shade, and read Wm.'s poems. Altered The Whirlblast, etc. We drank tea in the orchard." How young Wordsworth was, to have written such a poem as "The Brothers"!

Wordsworth seems to have returned to Keswick the next day with Coleridge, and to have stayed there till the 6th, the supplies at Greta Hall being meanwhile enriched by a large basket of peas sent over by the anxious sister. William had not been at home again

for more than two days when they both walked over the mountains to Wattendlath, and found themselves by eleven o'clock at night—at Coleridge's house! The next day Dorothy walked with Coleridge in the Windy Brow woods, and the next day, being Sunday, she records the fact that "the C.'s went to church." As J. Dykes Campbell mischievously notes, this upsets the general opinion that Coleridge never did such a thing. It was a week or two before they could tear themselves away, and the record of the visit is very incomplete. The brother and sister took at least one walk together along the Cockermouth road, their faces set towards the place of their birth, and perhaps their minds were on the old times there, though she remarks that William "was altering his poems." This expression recurs again and again in the Journal, with a frequency that would be alarming did we not know how much poetry he finally allowed to pass on to the printer. One might otherwise have feared that he might keep altering it for ever; and, indeed, gauged by a standard of mere time, he exerted himself far more in revision than in the first utterance of a poem. As an example of the extreme care taken with poems while they were going through the press, I will quote here a passage from Mrs. Davy's manuscript Memories of William Wordsworth. Whether it refers to 1800 or 1802 is not clear, and makes no difference:

"*Monday, April* 22, 1850.—I had some talk which interested me much to-day with good Mrs. Nicholson at the post-office, concerning Mr. Wordsworth. She has known him perhaps longer than anyone here, and in her simple, homely, hearty manner does as full justice to his sweet and fine qualities as anyone could do. She went back, in the manner of the old, on her earlier days of acquaintance with the poet and his sister, when they lived at Grasmere, and when, as she said, they would often walk to Ambleside together after dark, in order to repair some omission or alter some arrangement in the proof-sheets of his Poems, which had been posted for the press. 'At that time,' said Mrs. N., 'the mail used to pass through at one in the morning,

so my husband and me used to go early to bed; but when Mr. and Miss W. came, let it be as late as it would, my husband would get up and let them in and give them their letter out of the box, and then they would sit up in our parlour or in the kitchen, discussing over it and reading and changing till they had made it quite to their minds, and then they would seal up the packet again, and knock at our bed-room door, and say, "Now, Mr. Nicholson, please will you bolt the door after us? Here is our letter now for the post. We'll not trouble you any more this night." And, oh, they were always so friendly to us and so loving to one another.' "

On Sunday, August 17, Dorothy says: "William read us The Seven Sisters"—*i.e.*, "The Solitude of Binnorie." A few days later "Wm. read Peter Bell and the poem of Joanna, beside the Rothay by the roadside." The latter piece, like the others included by Wordsworth under the general title of "Poems on the Naming of Places," presents many difficulties to the commentator. If, as is commonly supposed, the Lady of the poem was Mary Hutchinson's sister Joanna, there is no other evidence that she had ever visited Grasmere, and certain it is that she could not have been there in Wordsworth's company eighteen months before the poem was written, as the heroine of the laugh is declared to have been. It was published in 1800. Wordsworth was always purposely and studiously inexact in passages containing personal references to himself and his friends. If biography were to depend entirely upon his poems for the record of his life, the chronology would be hopelessly contradictory. The "Poems on the Naming of Places" show his fine independence of ordinary standards. He was content to write for himself and the small circle about him, and indifferent to the rewards of fame; for he can scarcely have had publication in view, although some of the pieces did appear in the next volume he published. They are examples also, it must be said, of a dangerous tendency to look so closely at small things that he sometimes failed to see them in proper perspective. It is no wonder if many readers found these poems too personal, too particular. Beauties

of their own they of course possess, yet few persons would take the trouble to seek these out and do them justice if the entire achievement of their author had not lent interest—a deep and delightful interest—to all his friendships, haunts, and habits.

These remarks are not intended to be applied to "Peter Bell." That great and unique poem, a startling innovation in our literature, is no doubt a stumbling-block to many readers, but no one who even half understands Wordsworth's motives and principles can fail to perceive that it is one of his most characteristic works. In it, fully as much as in any other poem he ever wrote, we have the fruit of those profound studies in psychology which had engaged him for several years. He believed, and modern research has confirmed his opinion, that the science of psychology could be enriched by attention to the particular rather than the general. Since "normal" is only a term by which men assert an undue supremacy for what they deem to be general, it follows that human nature can best be investigated in specific cases, not one of which is ever really normal—that is to say, stamped with all the qualities of any given standard. "Sanity" is a mere abstraction. There is no wholly sane individual. And for certain purposes of investigation more can be learned from persons distinctly below the average of intelligence or of moral strength than from those whose natural propensities are overlaid with acquired wisdom and restrained by vigorous will-power. The oculist paralyzes the accommodation of the eye in order to see into its depths. Just so, the student of the mind can often see more plainly the recesses of our nature when it lies helplessly deprived of the immunities provided by strong volition. And what he sees there is not always unlovely or without honour to the species. Much rare information, many a deep vision and keen feeling, can be found in "defectives," as we call them now. Some things have been hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. Wordsworth took the pains to explain that his Idiot Boy was precisely what we term a "defective." In "Peter Bell" he wished,

in particular, to illustrate the influence of natural objects upon a soul amenable to superstition, but to few of the other means by which the race has been educated from animal grossness up to reason and self-control. It may perhaps be disputed whether he was wise to indulge, here and there, in a kind of grotesque simplicity, which looks like humour, but is not. Both he and Coleridge worked occasionally in this vein. There are traces of it, and wholly admirable, in the "Ancient Mariner." They had in view a certain strain of tragic rudeness which occurs sometimes in stories invented by children and in many old ballads.

There were frequent conferences with Coleridge about the contents of the new and enlarged edition of "Lyrical Ballads." By the most direct route, over Dunmail Raise, the distance between Keswick and Grasmere is fully thirteen miles, and these lovers of the hills were not always content to travel by the road, but sometimes made the arduous détour by way of Wattendlath, or even climbed over mighty Helvellyn. For example, under date of August 31, Dorothy writes: "At 11 o'clock Coleridge came, when I was walking in the still clear moonshine in the garden. He came over Helvellyn. Wm. was gone to bed, and John also, worn out with his ride round Coniston. We sate and chatted till half-past three." He stayed at Dove Cottage several days at least, and the time was rich in friendly talk. Coleridge read part of "Christabel." Wordsworth read what he had lately written, and one great result of the visit was that Wordsworth soon afterwards began to toil over his supreme work in prose, the Preface to the 1800 edition of "Lyrical Ballads." This essay, which revived in modern English the grand style of the seventeenth century, and is justly ranked with Sidney's "Defence of Poesie" as one of the noblest pieces of criticism in our language, or in any language, bears deep traces of Coleridge's influence, notwithstanding its thoroughly individual character. The entries in the Journal for the first three days of September tell so much of the dear companionship between the Words-

worths and their friend, that I transcribe the greater part of them. The Mr. Simpson who is mentioned was the clergyman at Wythburn, the tiny hamlet on the Keswick road just beyond Dunmail Raise. The Wordsworths were for ever stopping at his house to rest and drink tea and exchange gossip on their way to and from Keswick, and the Simpsons were often at Dove Cottage. It was just like Coleridge to find a hitherto undiscovered resource in the tiny orchard. And the instances here recorded will serve as well as a dozen others which might have been quoted, to show how he turned night into day.

"*Monday Morning, 1st September.*—We walked in the wood by the lake. W. read Joanna, and the Firgrove, to Coleridge. They bathed. The morning was delightful, with somewhat of an autumnal freshness. After dinner, Coleridge discovered a rock-seat in the orchard. Cleared away brambles. Coleridge went to bed after tea. John and I followed Wm. up the hill, and then returned to go to Mr. Simpson's. We borrowed some bottles for bottling rum. The evening somewhat frosty and grey, but very pleasant. I broiled Coleridge a mutton chop, which he ate in bed. Wm. was gone to bed. I chatted with John and Coleridge till near 12.

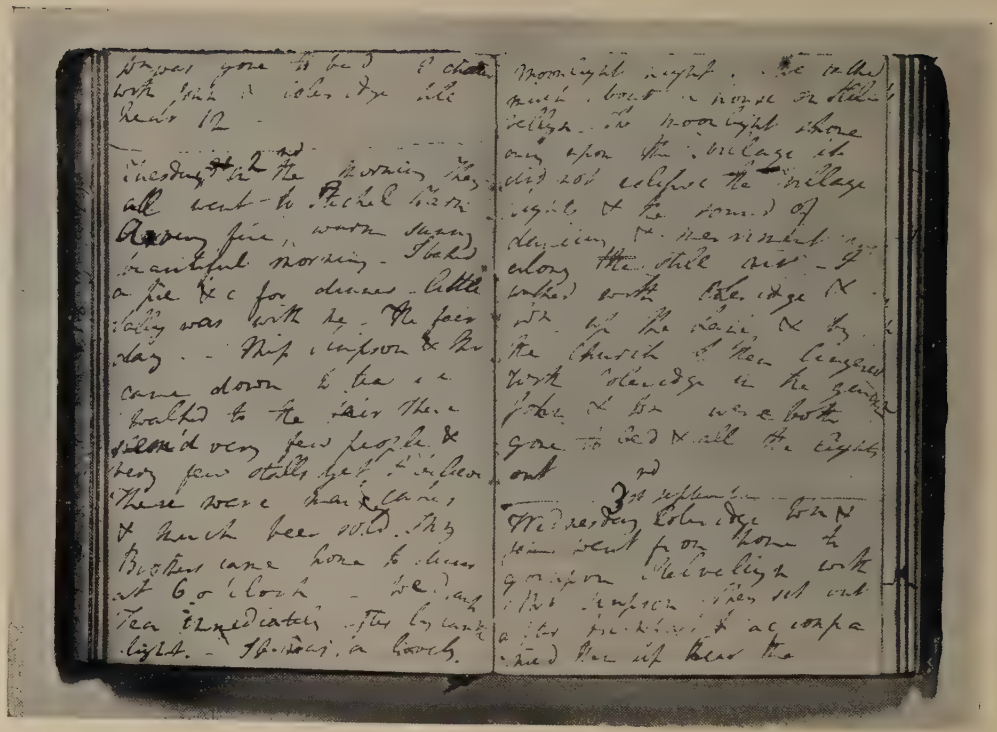
"*Tuesday, 2nd.*—In the morning they all went to Stickle Tarn. A very fine, warm, sunny, beautiful morning. I baked a pie, etc., for dinner. Little Sally was with me. The fair-day. Miss Simpson and Mr. came down to tea. We walked to the fair. There seemed very few people and very few stalls, yet I believe there were many cakes and much beer sold. My brothers came home to dinner at 6 o'clock. We drank tea immediately after by candlelight. It was a lovely moonlight night. We talked much about a house on Helvellyn. The moonlight shone only upon the village. It did not eclipse the village lights, and the sound of dancing and merriment came along the still air. I walked with Coleridge and Wm. up the lane and by the church, and then lingered with Coleridge in the garden. John and Wm. were both gone to bed, and all the lights out.

"*Wednesday, 3rd September.*—Coleridge, Wm., and John went from home, to go upon Helvellyn with Mr. Simpson. They set out after breakfast. I accompanied them up near the blacksmith's. . . . I then went to a

funeral at John Dawson's. About 10 men and 4 women. Bread, cheese, and ale. They talked sensibly and cheerfully about common things. The dead person, 56 years of age, buried by the parish. The coffin was neatly lettered and painted black, and covered with a decent cloth. They set the corpse down at the door; and, while we stood within the threshold, the men, with their hats off, sang, with decent and solemn countenances, a verse of a funeral psalm. The corpse was then borne down the hill, and they sang till they had passed the Town-End. I was affected to tears while we stood in the house, the coffin lying before me. There were no near kindred, no children. When we got out of the dark house the sun was shining, and the prospect looked as divinely beautiful as I ever saw it. It seemed more sacred than I had ever seen it, and yet more allied to human life. The green fields, in the neighbourhood of the churchyard, were as green as possible; and, with the brightness of the sunshine, looked quite gay. I thought she was going to a quiet spot, and I could not help weeping very much. When we came to the bridge, they began to sing again, and stopped during four lines before they entered the churchyard. . . . Wm. and John came home at 10 o'clock."

On September 10, 1800, Dorothy writes to Mrs. Marshall: "We meditate a journey to the neighbourhood of Scarborough to see our friends the Hutchinsons, who are settled there; we shall then extend our journey further and stop with you at Leeds. Our plan is to purchase a taxed cart, which we can have for seven guineas, and hire a horse if we cannot afford to buy one; but this being altogether a very grand scheme, a large sum will be necessary to execute it, and it will depend entirely upon William's success with the booksellers."

Miss Wordsworth entered many a mountain and village household, and shared the joys and sorrows of many a humble family. Her brother, though absorbed in his work, took his part in all these interests. Poor foundered travellers, peddlers, and destitute children, often came to their door for a bit to eat and a small dole. Help was given neither carelessly nor grudgingly, but after close and sympathetic inquiry. The cottage often



FACSIMILE OF TWO PAGES OF DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S JOURNAL
FOR SEPTEMBER 1, 2, AND 3, 1800

sheltered some visiting friend, though money and provisions were scarce enough. They lived on terms of great friendliness with their humble neighbours, the Ashburners, performing and accepting a thousand kind acts. Charles Lloyd was living at Ambleside, and sometimes called. The Journal was neglected throughout the middle of September, and written up from memory afterwards. It mentions several calls from "Jones," and finally a week's visit from him, ending September 26. This may have been the Rev. Robert Jones, Wordsworth's old college friend, his companion on his walking trip through France. Coleridge came in on the 26th, and on the 29th John Wordsworth went away to join his ship, the *Earl of Abergavenny*. The farewell took place near Grisedale Tarn, at the top of the pass dividing the vale of Grasmere from the eastern valleys that lead to Penrith. His sister wrote: "Wm. and I parted with him in sight of Ullswater. It was a fine day, showery, but with sunshine and fine clouds. Poor fellow, my heart was right sad. I could not help thinking we should see him again because he was only going to Penrith." The sailor brother had a childlike and lovable nature. He loved poetry and had read deeply, though not widely. He shared the fondness of his older brother and sister for out-door life, and was altogether a cheerful and congenial comrade.

The last sheet of the Notes and Preface to "Lyrical Ballads" was written out by the faithful amanuensis on September 30, and corrected on October 1, 1800. The next day was spent in well-earned recreation. They went to their lovely haunt on Butterlip How, and looked up into Easedale, where William was wont to compose beside the rushing brook. And Dorothy records a telltale fact, in terms perhaps unconsciously amusing, which shows how very human she and her brother were: "We had a pleasant conversation about the manners of the rich; avarice, inordinate desires, and the effeminacy, unnaturalness, and unworthy objects of education." Among the consolations of poverty this form of entertainment counts for a good deal.

On October 3, 1800, realizing that she had under her hand the material for a poem, and perhaps obeying her brother's suggestion, she wrote the following details of an incident which to most persons would have seemed unimportant. Wordsworth did not begin to compose "The Leech Gatherer" till May 3, 1802, but here is its real beginning:

"When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double. He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders, above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on and a nightcap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. John, who afterwards met him at Wytheburn, took him for a Jew. He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, and 'she was a good woman, and it pleased God to bless us with ten children.' All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches were scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle, where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to this dry season, but many years they had been scarce. He supposed it owing to their being much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth. Leeches were formerly 2s. 6d. per 100; they are now 30s. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broken, his body driven over, his skull fractured. He felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was then late in the evening, when the light was just going away."

On October 4 Coleridge came in, very wet, while they were at dinner, and talked till twelve, though he had sat up all the night before, "writing essays for the newspaper." He read them the second part of "Christabel." He read it again next day, and they had "increasing pleasure." No doubt conversation with Coleridge gave Wordsworth fresh ideas, for he and Dorothy spent the morning writing an addition to the Preface. As was generally the case, excessive labour made William very ill, and he went to bed. Coleridge and Dorothy "walked to Ambleside after dark with the letter," no doubt the

fresh manuscript of this addition. Coleridge intended to leave them the next day, but did not, and after tea they read "The Pedlar"—*i.e.*, a portion of "The Excursion." It was determined not to print "Christabel" with the "Lyrical Ballads." On the following day Dorothy accompanied Coleridge as far as Mr. Simpson's on his way home. She records the receipt of a five-pound note from Basil Montagu, who was gradually paying what he owed them for the care of his son.

By far the most interesting entries in the Journal for the last three months in 1800 are those which relate how the poem "Michael" was composed. The theme appears to have been suggested to Wordsworth by some actual occurrence. He had now been living long enough among his rustic neighbours to know and appreciate to the full some of their touching domestic tales. The story of "Michael," as it came to him, was connected with a particular spot, hidden in the green bosom of the hills, about two miles from the vale of Grasmere. One fine October day, when the colours of the mountains were "soft and rich with orange fern, the cattle pasturing upon the hilltops, kites sailing in the sky, sheep bleating, and feeding in the watercourses," Dorothy and William "walked up Greenhead Gill in search of a sheepfold." They found it "in the form of a heart unequally divided," but already falling away. Yet the stones were still lying, a hundred and twelve years later, in much the same shape, and nothing that had happened, of joy or grief, of improvement or destruction, in all this world, had altered the scene in any respect. Only the sky was visible, and the swelling outline and green slopes of Fairfield, and the dashing torrent, and a few boulders. The great poem, apparently so simple in construction and so free from artifice in verse, cost Wordsworth immense toil. He began to compose it immediately after visiting the sheepfold, and returned to the task again and again, wearing himself out, as his sister relates, until on December 9 she writes: "Wm. finished his poem to-day." The great calm of this and other poems was not attained without vast expense of emotion.

"He writes," said Dorothy, "with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain."

Meanwhile the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads" was being slowly prepared. Coleridge, who was writing for *The Morning Post*, left the work almost entirely to Wordsworth. He would drop in at Town-end for dinner or to spend a few days, coming empty-handed, but abounding in glorious talk. A characteristic record is that of October 22: "Wm. composed without much success at the sheepfold. Coleridge came in to dinner. He had done nothing. We were very merry. C. and I went to look at the prospect from his seat. Wm. read Ruth, etc., after supper. Coleridge read Christabel." The neighbourhood—and it must be remembered that there were scarcely any limits to it—was full of "seats" and "nooks," favourite views and trees and rocks, which this delightful trio loved with childlike attachment. It is a proof of Wordsworth's intense individuality that his Preface to the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads," if we except one sentence, to be mentioned later, has a style completely his own, for it was written in the intervals of Coleridge's impassioned conversation.

Of this good fellowship we nowhere obtain a better glimpse than in Coleridge's letter to Humphry Davy, from Keswick, July 25, 1800:

"W. Wordsworth is such a lazy fellow that I bemire myself by making promises for him: the moment I received your letter, I wrote to him. He will, I hope, write immediately to Biggs and Cottle. At all events, those poems must not yet be delivered up to them, because that beautiful poem, 'The Brothers,' which I read to you in Paul Street, I neglected to deliver to you, and that must begin the volume: I trust, however, that I have invoked the sleeping bard with a spell so potent that he will awake and deliver up the sword of Argantyr which is to rive the enchanter *Gaudyverse* from his crown to his foot. . . . We drank tea to-night before I left Grasmere, on the island in that lovely lake; our kettle swung over the fire, hanging from the branch of a fir-tree, and I lay and saw the woods, and mountains, and lake all trembling, and as it were idealized through the

subtle smoke, which rose up from the clear, red embers of the fir-apples which we had collected: afterwards we made a glorious bonfire on the margin, by some elder-bushes, whose twigs heaved and sobbed in the uprushing column of smoke, and the image of the bonfire, and of us that danced round it, ruddy, laughing faces in the twilight; the image of this in a lake, smooth as that sea to whose waves the Son of God had said *Peace!* May God, and all his sons, love you as I do."

Coleridge's joyous impatience burst out in a letter to Josiah Wedgwood, from Keswick, November 1:

"Wordsworth's second volume of Lyrical Ballads will, I hope, and almost believe, afford you as unmingled pleasure as is in the nature of a collection of very varied poems to afford to one individual mind. Sheridan has sent to him too—requests him to write a tragedy for Drury Lane. But W. will not be diverted by anything from the prosecution of his great work."

By this, no doubt, is meant the projected philosophical poem, of which many hundred lines had already been written, at Racedown, at Alfoxden, and in Germany.

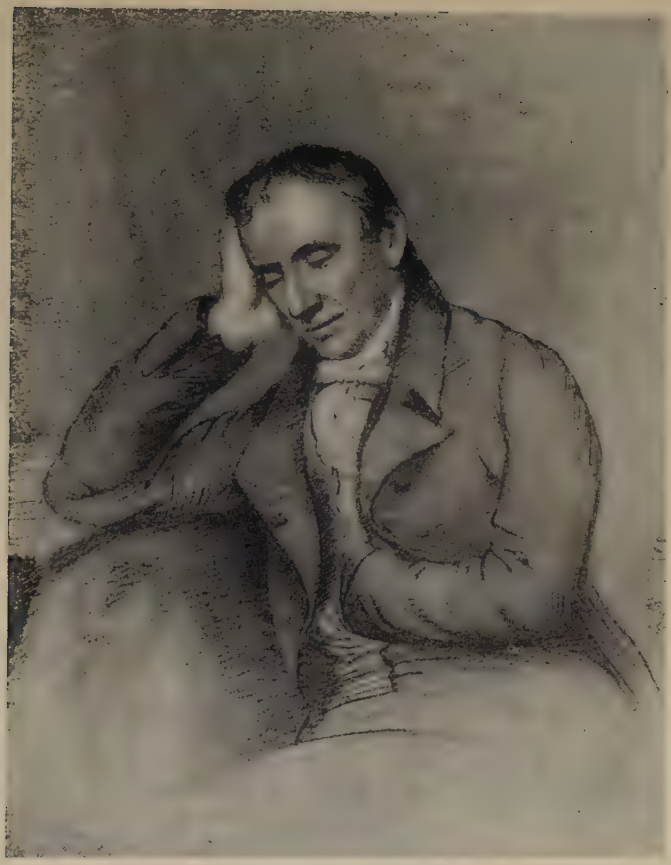
CHAPTER XIV

WORDSWORTH THE CRITIC

THUS the year 1800 came to a happy end. Grasmere had completely won the poet and his sister. The natural beauty of the place had lifted their spirits to an unwonted height. Their rustic neighbours had gained their respect and affection. Of educated people they had within reach the Simpsons at Wythburn, Charles Lloyd at Ambleside, Thomas Clarkson, the anti-slavery agitator, and his amiable wife, at Eusemere on Ullswater, and the Coleridges at Keswick. A great period of poetical studies had been rounded out with the completion of "Lyrical Ballads," and the way cleared for work of a different character. Of this latter sort, "Michael" was already done, "The Leech Gatherer" was conceived, and progress had been made with the philosophical poem which was to occupy the coming years.

To speak of the book prepared in 1800 as a second edition of "Lyrical Ballads" is, and always has been, confusing. Wordsworth hoped that its predecessor had gained for him a number of readers,* and he wished to alter some of the poems it contained. From every other consideration, it would have been more proper to give the new book a fresh name. One is tempted to suspect that Wordsworth, in his correspondence with the publishers and in other references to the book, unduly subordinates Coleridge to himself. It is true that "Christabel" was not included in the volume, and that, with the exception of the "Ancient Mariner"

* As Mr. Thomas Hutchinson has conjectured, with the approval of W. Hale White ("A Description of the Wordsworth and Coleridge Manuscripts in the Possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman," 1897), the favourable review in *The British Critic* of October, 1799, attributing the whole work to Coleridge, had probably helped to sell some of the edition, of which Cottle had given the copyright to Wordsworth.



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

From a pencil drawing by Edward Nash, in the possession of Mrs. J. M. Moorson, of Keswick.

and "Love," Coleridge's contributions were very slight. He had been expected to furnish more, and Dorothy more than once records her disappointment at his failure to do so. He wrote to his friend Humphry Davy at Bristol, on October 9, 1800, an explanation of Wordsworth's conduct which fails to convince:

"The 'Christabel' was running up to 1,300 lines, and was so much admired by Wordsworth that he thought it indelicate to print two volumes with his name, in which so much of another man's was included; and, which was more of consequence, the poem was in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the Lyrical Ballads were published, viz., an experiment to see how far those passions which alone give any value to extraordinary incidents, were capable of interesting, in and for themselves, in the incidents of common life. We mean to publish the 'Christabel,' therefore, with a long blank-verse poem of Wordsworth's entitled 'The Pedlar.'"

"Christabel" probably never ran to such a length except in the imagination of its author, and the inconsistency of which Coleridge makes so much is not at all evident. As is apparent from the correspondence between William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Coleridge, on the one hand, with Biggs and Cottle the printers and Longman the publisher, on the other, every arrangement was made with Coleridge's full consent. Among the notes to the first volume of the new edition, however, there was the following criticism of the "Ancient Mariner," ostensibly written by Wordsworth, and said by W. Hale White to have been sent to the printers in Dorothy's handwriting. It affects one unpleasantly, as a piece of ungracious frankness. Wordsworth, one feels, ought not to have called attention to the defects of his colleague's work, even though the latter had detected them and considered them important. The note is as follows; it was not reprinted after 1801:

"I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in

some sort to me; as the author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon; thirdly, that the events, having no necessary connection, do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, though the metre is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely, that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the poem a value which is not often possessed by better poems. On this account I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it."

No doubt this was printed with Coleridge's consent, but he, kind soul, would have been willing to make a public confession of still graver defects. Charles Lamb, it is refreshing to know, took up the cudgels for him, and, replying to Wordsworth point by point, in a letter written immediately after the volume was published, concludes: "You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see."

How the printers ever managed to get the book out is a marvel. The manuscript came to them piecemeal in the handwriting of the two poets and Dorothy, not to mention Sara Hutchinson, who was staying at Townend; the punctuation was done in part by Coleridge

and in part by Humphry Davy at Bristol; there were numerous changes of text, and some pages were cancelled. The authors were in the Lake country, the printers in the West, the publishers in London. Yet it appeared, not more than a month behind time, in January, 1801.

Recluse though he was, Wordsworth had a way of bursting into the arena of public life when he saw a fit occasion. His zeal for the welfare of his country never slackened, and he was not restrained by false humility, feeling himself entitled by power of intellect to address whomsoever he chose. He sent a copy of the new work to the great Whig statesman, Charles James Fox, who had temporarily withdrawn from politics, and was indulging himself in an immense feast of ancient and modern literature. The gift was accompanied with a long letter, dated January 14, 1801. In this Wordsworth boldly affirms his confidence that he has performed one of the noblest functions of a poet: he has done public service by revealing the instincts and principles of one set of men to another; he has, as we should now say, in the words of Tolstoi, "made that understood and felt which, in the form of an argument, might be incomprehensible and inaccessible," and thereby "united people." The letter not only shows this high consciousness of religious performance, but is remarkable also as indicating a shift in the author's political point of view. Among the sources of distress and moral degradation he no longer mentions militarism and the Tory measures which drew forth his denunciation seven years before; it is now rather the evils of industrialism and their false palliatives which he attacks, and it is plain that the new Whiggery will not meet with his approval. And no wonder; for the workhouse in 1800 was as horrible as the factory.

"Recently," declares Wordsworth, "by the spreading of manufactures through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes upon postage, by workhouses, houses of industry, and the invention of soup-shops, etc., superadded to the increasing disproportion between the price

of labour and that of the necessaries of life, the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor, as far as the influence of these things has extended, have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed." And he adds: "In the two poems, The Brothers, and Michael, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent proprietors of land, here called statesmen, men of respectable education, who daily labour on their own properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty. But if they are proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire amongst such men is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying-point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man, from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. This class of men is rapidly disappearing. You, Sir, have a consciousness, upon which every good man will congratulate you, that the whole of your public conduct has, in one way or other, been directed to the preservation of this class of men, and those who hold similar situations. You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the poor. The two poems, which I have mentioned, were written with a view to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply. 'Pectus enim est quod disertos facit, et vis mentis. Ideoque imperitis quoque, si modo sint aliquo affectu concitati, verba non desunt.' The poems are faithful copies from nature; and I hope whatever effect they may have upon you, you will at least be able to perceive that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts, and may in some small degree enlarge our feeling of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature, by showing that our best qualities are possessed by men whom we are too apt to consider, not with reference to the points in

which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us. I thought, at a time when these feelings are sapped in so many ways, that the two poems might co-operate, however feebly, with the illustrious efforts which you have made to stem this and other evils with which the country is labouring; and it is on this account alone that I have taken the liberty of thus addressing you."

This way of regarding poetry was thoroughly characteristic of Wordsworth. It was a new way, and Fox, who thought the finest compositions of the eighteenth century were Pope's "Eloisa," Voltaire's "Zaïre," Gray's "Elegy," and Metastasio's "Isacco," failed to see that his correspondent was in earnest; failed to see the point, that is, and thought only of metre. In his long-deferred reply, dated May 25, he says: "The poems have given me the greatest pleasure; and if I were obliged to choose out of them, I do not know whether I should not say that 'Harry Gill,' 'We are Seven,' 'The Mad Mother,' and 'The Idiot,' are my favourites. I read with particular attention the two you pointed out; but whether it be from early prepossessions, or whatever other cause, I am no great friend to blank-verse for subjects which are to be treated of with simplicity." Evidently Fox, contrary to popular opinion, did not have his heart sufficiently near his head, for Coleridge had written to Davy in December: "It ["Michael"] is of a mild, unimposing character, but full of beauties to those short-necked men who have their hearts sufficiently near their heads—the relative distance of which (according to citizen Tourder, the French translator of Spallanzani) determines the sagacity or stupidity of all bipeds and quadrupeds."

Coleridge wrote to Poole in January that by his own advice, and at Longman's expense, copies, with appropriate letters, had been sent to the Duchess of Devonshire, Sir Bland Burgess, Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Fox, Mr. Wilberforce, and two or three others. He had dictated all the other letters, he declared, while Wordsworth wrote the one to Mr. Fox. "I have had that letter

transcribed for you," he adds, "for its excellence, and mine to Wilberforce, because the two contain a good view of our notions and motives, poetical and political."

No comment on the poems of the second volume could disclose the poet's purpose so well as his own account of "Michael," in a letter to Poole, dated April 9.

"In the last poem of my 2nd volume," he says, "I have attempted to give a picture of a man, of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart—the parental affection, and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence. This poem has, I know, drawn tears from the eyes of more than one—persons well acquainted with the manners of the 'Statesmen,' as they are called, of this country; and, moreover, persons who never wept in reading verse before."

He is anxious, he says, to know the effect of the poem on Poole, who himself possesses an inherited estate and is familiar with the language, manners, and feeling of the middle order of people who dwell in the country. "Perhaps in England there is no more competent judge than you must be of the skill and knowledge with which my pictures are drawn. I had a still further wish that this poem should please you, because in writing it I had your character often before my eyes, and sometimes thought I was delineating such a man as you yourself would have been under the same circumstances."

This revelation of Wordsworth's concern for the maintenance and spread of the happiness based on the ownership of small homes helps us to understand his alarm at the growth of industrialism. He saw that under the guise of what were then called liberal ideas, powerful political forces, in alliance with business interests, were luring the rural population of England into manufacturing towns, breaking up families and home ties, turning independent workers into mill "hands," changing the face of the country, cheapening life, and diminishing happiness. This explains much in his political philosophy which later appeared to be reac-

tionary. It explains much of his future distrust of what younger or shallower men deemed progress, and it is perfectly in harmony with his Revolutionary zeal of former years.

No one has ever sufficiently pointed out how much solicitude considerations of this kind caused in the hearts of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Poole. To understand Wordsworth's poetry, it is absolutely necessary that his views on this subject should be taken into account. They were the outgrowth of close observation and anxious sympathy. He may have been lacking in those outstanding qualities which enable some men to mix freely with persons of inferior education and humbler station. Such persons perhaps never realized that he appreciated and loved them. But to a very large extent he lived for them. We have only to think of Goethe, his purely intellectual and æsthetic interests, his careful system of self-protection, his aristocratic exclusiveness, to perceive that, in comparison with him, Wordsworth was the true philanthropist. Yet Goethe, in a condescending hour, would probably have "got on better" with humble people, and appeared more genial than Wordsworth. Coleridge shared his friend's anxiety. Lacking Wordsworth's consistency and self-restraint, however, he gave way to his impatience in terms for which even Poole, with his advanced ideas, reproved him. Coleridge replied rather testily in a letter of October 5: "I own I have formed long and meditative habits of aversion to the Rich, love to the Poor or the *un*wealthy, and belief in the excessive evils arising from Property. How is it *possible*, Poole, that you can have all these feelings?" We may be sure that these topics formed a frequent subject of conversation at Town-end.

Wordsworth has often been blamed for taking himself seriously and appreciating his own poetry at its full value. Very great and very little men are the ones to give offence by taking themselves seriously, and the objection might be summarily dismissed by asking whether Wordsworth was not, then, a very great man. And for seeing in his poetry the excellence which wise readers

have more and more come to see in it, we can only praise his critical vision. Yet we may easily excuse even good judges of poetry and some of his best friends, notably Lamb, for being stunned by the calm assurance, not obtrusive, yet absolutely unyielding, with which he gave them to understand that he knew how great he was. Lamb thought Wordsworth vain and pompous in his remarks about "Lyrical Ballads." What seemed to him most ridiculous was the poet's eagerness to know his opinion of the book, taken in connection with what appeared to be an effort at lofty indifference.

When once this bad beginning was over, the poems won their way into Lamb's heart of hearts, in spite of his professed dislike for the country and, what was more formidable, his taste for romance, for the quaint, the curious, the unusual, in phraseology and feeling. And, of course, there were no dregs of personal ill-will. Lamb continued to think, as he had said to Lloyd the year before, that such men as Coleridge and Wordsworth "would exclude solitude in the Hebrides or Thule."

It will be well at this point to consider, in connection with one another, the Prefaces to the different editions of "Lyrical Ballads," and certain letters which passed between the poet and John Wilson (Christopher North), on subjects connected therewith. The Preface of 1798 began with a bold challenge:

"It is the honourable characteristic of poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind. The evidence of this fact is to be sought, not in the writings of Critics, but in those of Poets themselves. The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts

can be permitted to assume that title. It is desirable that such readers, for their own sakes, should not suffer the solitary word Poetry, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification; but that, while they are perusing this book, they should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favourable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision."

Fault was found with "We are Seven" and "Anecdote for Fathers," on the ground that the incidents they recorded were insignificant; with "Simon Lee" for the simplicity of its language; with "The Idiot Boy" because its subject was strange and supposedly not capable of imparting pleasure. Readers accustomed to what Tolstoi calls "esoteric" art—that is, art for which a special and unnatural taste has had to be fostered—were inclined to call the whole collection "disgusting." Some were repelled by the "lowness" of the characters; it was thought paradoxical to attribute fineness of feeling or heroic strength of passion to persons of humble rank. These objections, combining in varying proportions, were urged by Wordsworth's friends, and were stated, as we have seen, in the reviews. Wordsworth's convictions were not shaken nor was his courage abated by these unfavourable judgments. But he learned that it was necessary to educate the public, not merely by example, but by precept, and that it would be well to set forth his literary principles much more elaborately than he had done before. With severe toil he produced a second Preface, more than twelve times as long as the first. In this he advanced what almost amounts to a systematic theory of poetic art. It is certainly, with the possible exception of Sidney's "Defence of Poesie," the most eloquent, as it is without rival the most weighty, treatise on the subject in our language. Although the specific application of his views makes the work here and there, and particularly in the latter part, appear less general than if they had been embodied in a formal

essay, there is really no lack of largeness. The Preface is much more than an introduction to "Lyrical Ballads." It is an exposition of the fundamental laws of association as applied in poetry. It announces not only Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, though that would be a notable performance, for Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction has given a fresh texture to nearly all English poetry for the last hundred years; but it heralds one of the most splendid triumphs of democracy. Wordsworth vindicated a levelling-up process in two particulars: the choice of language and the choice of subjects. When the poems and the prefaces were new, they seemed startling innovations; we have grown so accustomed to their results that now they do not sufficiently impress us. We fail to take them quite seriously, as they were intended to be taken. Yet the theory is scarcely to be distinguished from Tolstoi's, and its most complete illustration is to be found in "Leaves of Grass."

Wordsworth was not the man to abandon a position because it was attacked. But he recognized, and probably was persuaded by Coleridge, that his phrase about "the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society" needed to be considerably modified. Accordingly, in the first paragraph of the second Preface, he makes a more accurate statement:

> "The first volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart."

Here is, of course, an immense difference. The validity of the earlier statement could have been disproved from the poems themselves. The latter statement accurately describes the language of the best poetry in all ages. Neither Wordsworth nor Tolstoi calls for a new kind of poetry. They distinguish universal art, which interprets the deep experiences common to man-

kind in terms commonly understood, from esoteric and decadent art, which is limited in its source, its medium, and its appeal. Yet so corrupted had the taste of many readers of poetry become, that the fit audience were very few.

It has been taken for granted generally that the taste for English poetry was peculiarly depraved in the eighteenth century. I doubt if it is not still and has not always been the case, that simplicity and realism shock before they please those persons who have received the sort of education that removes them, in knowledge, from the mass of their fellow-men. Certain influences had been at work since the time of Shakespeare to widen this gap. The Anglican clergy had been drawn increasingly from the upper classes, and educated at the universities to an extent unknown in pre-Reformation times. A certain tincture of classical learning had become one of the pretensions of the masters of the land. The universities themselves had lost touch with actuality by giving up in large measure the practical side of their work. Since the Middle Ages, they had been frequented, in increased proportion, by men with no professional career in view, whose object in attending them was to obtain general culture or social polish. This is not to say that the culture and polish were not real, or that the spreading of literary taste among the upper classes was not extremely valuable to the nation. But the taste was for qualities beyond the scope of readers not thus trained and privileged. It preferred the antique to the modern, perhaps justly, but with exaggeration of the difference between them, and so blandly and complacently as to make innovation appear impudent. Classicism means the establishment of standards. The standard of poetic diction had been profoundly and unfortunately modified by a caste. Wordsworth realized this, and knew that his appreciative readers would be those few persons among the educated who were original enough to read with their own eyes. "I had formed," he says in the second Preface, "no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of these Poems: I

flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure: and, on the other hand, I was well aware that by those who should dislike them they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please." He declines to undertake a systematic defence of the theory upon which the poems were written, but admits that "there would be something like impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed."

The general opinion no doubt was, and perhaps on a lower plane still is, that poetry is an art of decoration, that poetry adds something to nature by way of improvement. The idea was well expressed by Cowper in his "Tyrocinium," where, speaking of the soul of man, he says:

> For her the Fancy, roving unconfined,
> The present Muse of every pensive mind,
> Works magic wonders, adds a brighter hue
> To Nature's scenes, than Nature ever knew.

He did not hesitate, therefore, to write of "feathered tribes domestic" when he meant hens. Nor did Thomson probably dream that he was not really complimenting nature when he wrote:

> Oh, stretched amid these orchards of the sun,
> Give me to drain the cocoa's milky bowl,
> And from the palm to draw its freshening wine,
> More bounteous far than all the frantic juice
> Which Bacchus pours.

A needle in Cowper's unroughened hands becomes "the threaded steel." A thick mist is a "frequent" mist, because in the Latin spices much poetry is embalmed. Thomson for the same reason treats us to "gelid" and "gravid" and "turgent." And it was no less authoritative a critic than Gray who wrote:

"The language of the age is never the language of poetry; except among the French, whose verse, where the thought or image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost everyone that has written has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivatives—nay, sometimes words of their own composition or invention. Shakespeare and Milton have been great creators this way; and no one more licentious than Pope or Dryden, who perpetually borrow expressions from the former. . . . Our language not being a settled thing (like the French) has an undoubted right to words of an hundred years old, provided antiquity have not rendered them unintelligible" ("On Poetic Diction," p. 121, edition of 1827).

A candid reader will not deny that most of the "Lyrical Ballads" in the edition of 1800 agree very accurately with the following statement:

"The principal object proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement."

It is obvious at a glance that five different purposes are mentioned in this declaration. The connection between them is not so obvious. First we have the choice of incidents and situations. In making this choice from common life Wordsworth was, of course, doing only what some English poets in every age had done, though few had done it so systematically. Then, the medium is to be a selection of the language really used by men, and such language is to be employed *throughout;* there are to be no deviations. The crude statement of the first Preface is here considerably modified, but the principle

is unchanged. Commonness and reality are still the essentials. But common life might be faithfully delineated in a selection of the language really used by men, and the result might have merely a scientific value; it might be devoid of every quality peculiar to poetry. This contingency is provided against by the faintly proffered proposal to throw over his subjects "a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect." The subordinate place of this proposition and the curiously guarded way in which it is made show how tenacious Wordsworth was of his main purpose—to preserve reality. There is here no compromise with artificiality, with the fanciful, the romantic. "Ordinary things," not chimæras or fairies, not personifications, not even rarities of nature, are to be presented to the mind; and although the aspect shall be unusual, it shall not be unnatural. To perceive the naturalness of the unusual, and that ordinary things are always interesting, is the personal trait of a poet. If he would become an artist and make other men see with his eyes, he must rouse them by means of unusual cases, yet his own understanding of life would be almost as complete without these.

The relation of the unusual to poetic art was a subject that had been much discussed with Coleridge at Alfoxden. Wordsworth's own discovery and decision, as regards the choice of subjects from common life and the choice of language really used by men, were made by himself, before he met Coleridge. The vagueness and fluidity of the third phrase we are now discussing, the very words "certain" and "unusual," and "aspect," are Coleridgean. This part of the proposal takes us back to the day when the idea which bore fruit in "Lyrical Ballads" was first conceived. The poems were to be weird. At that point Wordsworth had yielded to the persuasive talk of his new friend. Left to his own impulses, he would not, at that time, have entertained such a plan. "The Idiot Boy" appears to me to have been composed in an effort to furnish a counterpart in

weirdness to the "Ancient Mariner." Partly successful as it is, in a curious and rare kind, it nevertheless proves that Wordsworth was happier in the search for unusual aspects of ordinary things when he made the effort in his own way and not in the manner so gloriously used by Coleridge. Another subject the friends had often discussed in Somersetshire was the possibility of giving in poetry something like a systematic illustration of mental science. Here again, of course, the influence of Coleridge predominated; and when Wordsworth, in the fourth part of this complex declaration, says that he proposes "to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature," we may feel sure that such an idea and such a formal expression of it would never have come to him had he not still been, in psychology, dependent upon Coleridge. Even with Wordsworth's psychological classification of his poems before us, with his emphatic distinction between imagination and fancy, we yet feel that there was something not spontaneous and natural about all this. Having once adopted, with Coleridge's assistance, a doctrinaire habit of classifying his impulses, he would be likely to turn it to great account and hold fast to it. Coleridge, on the other hand, might fail, years later, to recognize the child of his own fertile brain. Wordsworth developed the thought that lay in the word "primary," and for this the credit is fully his own.

One may or may not be disappointed in the search for a systematic illustration, in his poetry, of the qualities or functions of the mind; in one respect, however, the service has been very thoroughly rendered: Wordsworth distinguishes what is "primary" in human nature from what is not. He perceives what are "those first affections," both in time and strength, which underlie human feeling; he exalts them as no other poet ever has done. The fifth part of the proposal is even more doctrinal and Coleridgean than the fourth: the primary laws of our nature are to be traced "chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a

state of excitement." Yet it cannot be denied that the theory is amply practised in such poems as "Ruth," "Lucy Gray," and "Michael." Poetry is full of illustrations of this principle; but where shall a more startling one be found than in these two stanzas?

> My horse moved on! hoof after hoof
> He raised, and never stopped:
> When down behind the cottage roof,
> At once, the bright moon dropped.
>
> What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
> Into a Lover's head!
> "O Mercy!" to myself I cried,
> "If Lucy should be dead!"

Unfolding his attack, he speaks with scorn of those poets who "separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites, of their own creation." To associate decadent art with its cause—*i.e.*, with the artist's estrangement from his fellow-men—was to anticipate Tolstoi in the central and most characteristic point of his teaching.

"All good poetry," he continues, "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling"; yet the greatest poets have been men who, "being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility," have thought long and deeply. Our thoughts are "the representatives of all our past feelings." These poems are distinguished, he says, from the poetry of the day by the fact that "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation," and not the reverse. He declares that "the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know that one being is elevated above another as he possesses this capability." As causes operating to blunt the sensibilities of men, he mentions the great national events which were then taking place and the growth of cities. Men sought to relieve the monotony

of their daily lives by reading accounts of extraordinary incidents, thus losing their taste for nature and literature. The secret of his style he sums up in a phrase, brief, exact, and comprehensive: "I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject." This does not mean that he professed to pay no attention to style. He achieved style, and achieved it laboriously, by seeking a true and sufficient verbal representation of his subject. He deplores the separation between prose and metrical composition in so far as the so-called poetic diction has stood between writers and the realities they wished to express. The true distinction, he says, lies between poetry and matter of fact, or science, and not between poetry and prose. As he proceeds in his argument his high sense of the value of poetry discloses itself. The poet, he declares, is "a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."

The poet, as Wordsworth conceives him, is not merely a passive instrument of nature. Not Wordsworth but Shelley it is who sings:

> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is.

Memory trained to service, and an active power of sympathy, are parts of the poet's endowment. They do not require immediate external excitement, but can evoke things absent and conjure up passions resembling those produced by real events. Many philosophers have hesitated to admit that the giving of pleasure is the purpose of poetry. Wordsworth, it is surprising to observe, in spite of the ethical and informing character of his own poetry, never questions this principle. The object of poetry, he says, is truth, but "the poet

writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man." He extends the principle much further, lifting the hedonistic element above the mists and mire of selfishness and setting it upon a level where it is transformed into grateful submission to the law of happiness. Biological science is thus irradiated with mystical faith. "Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure," he says, "be considered as a degradation of the poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure." There is, he declares, an overbalance of enjoyment even in those sympathies which are excited by pain. And then, in a passage which is probably unsurpassed for its eloquence and its tone of triumph even by the noblest pages of Sidney or Milton, he exclaims:

"The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, 'that he looks

before and after.' He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guide, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man."

Of all the famous interpretations of poetry, this surely is the largest in scope, the most philosophical, the most sympathetic. And as an example of English prose in the grand style, it is equal to the best of Hooker, Milton, Taylor, and Burke, and quite above the highest level of Dryden and Johnson. One ignorant of its date would hesitate to affirm that it was written in either the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. "Things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed"—this is speech of an older vintage, one would say, from which every trace of crudeness, every local taint, everything but what is perfect and immortal, has been removed by "the unimaginable touch of time." But the spirit of the passage is modern. Its recognition of science as the basis of poetry is more than modern; it is prophetic. And so, too, is the perception that the poet carries "everywhere with him relationship and love." We have here, on the one hand, the austere intellectual principle which saved Wordsworth himself from Romanticism, and may yet save the world from the superficial and unreal view of life and art which Romanticism has encouraged; and, on the other hand, a truly religious conception of human solidarity.

Passing over an important defence of the use of verse in writing poetry, we find Wordsworth plunging again into the deeper parts of his subject. Poetry, he tells us, "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity."

It is thus possible, even when the original sensations were painful, to hold in mind and reproduce creatively only such emotions as will give us an "overbalance of pleasure." He meets the banal objection that had been raised and always will be raised against some of his poems by admitting frankly that his method may sometimes have made it easy for him to give a false importance to matters of particular rather than general interest, and that thus he may have written upon unworthy subjects. He is more apprehensive that his language "may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases, from which no man can altogether protect himself." "Hence," he says, "I have no doubt that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic." With characteristic obstinacy, he argues that it would be unwise to attempt to alter these expressions.

It is appropriate to consider at this point a supplementary statement which Wordsworth added to the Preface for the next edition of "Lyrical Ballads" in 1802. He attributes the use of the so-called poetic diction to the vanity of poets, and especially of poor poets, and to the artificial expectation of readers, who have been led to associate such language with passion and the pleasure derived from passionate expressions. "A language," he declares, "was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men, *in any situation*." He denounces the abuse of the "pathetic fallacy," by which human feelings are attributed to inanimate objects, and sturdily maintains that in works of imagination and sentiment, "in proportion as ideas and feelings are valuable, whether the composition be in prose or in verse, they require and exact one and the same language." He agrees with Sir Philip Sidney in holding that "metre is but adventitious to composition, and the phraseology for which that passport is necessary, even where it may be graceful at all, will be little valued by the judicious."

John Wilson (Christopher North) was in 1802 a student at Glasgow University. Although only seventeen years old, he took a keen interest in intellectual questions. He was one of the first to see the importance of "Lyrical Ballads," and on May 24, 1802, wrote Wordsworth a long letter, inspired by reverence for his genius and modest questioning as to some of his methods. "That your poetry is the language of Nature," he says, "in my opinion admits of no doubt. Both the thoughts and expressions may be tried by that standard. You have seized upon those feelings that most deeply interest the heart, and that also come within the sphere of common observation. You do not write merely for the pleasure of philosophers and men of improved taste, but for all who think—for all who feel." He praises the poet, in rapturous terms, for his discovery of the "wonderful effect which the appearances of external nature have upon the mind when in a state of strong feeling." Admitting that he was at first incredulous as to the effect of landscape upon human character, he says that upon further consideration this theory has captivated him, and he runs ahead, in eager schoolboy fashion, to surmise that "it serves to explain those diversities in the structure of the mind which have baffled all the ingenuity of philosophers to account for." He begs the poet to confer with him in some broad consideration of this sort. Then he frankly protests that some of Wordsworth's subjects are too particular; they cover events which would have been of no consequence to an unconcerned spectator. It is improper, he thinks, to describe these in poetry. The instance he cites is, of course, "The Idiot Boy."

Although coming from a stranger and evidently from a youth, this letter was so penetrating that Wordsworth felt obliged to answer it seriously and at considerable length. As an apology for not going into even greater detail, he mentions that curious nervous affection which made the physical act of writing difficult for him: "There is scarcely any part in your letter that does not deserve particular notice; but partly from some consti-

tutional infirmities, and partly from certain habits of mind, I do not write any letters except upon business, not even to my dearest friends. Except during absence from my own family, I have not written five letters of friendship during the last five years." He enters minutely into the question of the influence of external nature upon human character, declaring this influence to be very general, though more marked in some regions than in others, and requiring for its most powerful effects "a peculiar sensibility of original organization combining with moral accidents, as is exhibited in The Brothers and Ruth." But he does not flinch from his original statement that the impression of external nature is felt by all human beings: "How dead soever many full-grown men may outwardly seem to these things, all are more or less affected by them; and in childhood, in the first practice and exercise of their senses, they must have been not the nourishers merely, but often the fathers of their passions." This effect is shown, not in individuals merely, but upon the national character of small homogeneous peoples "in tracts of country where images of danger, melancholy, grandeur, or loveliness, softness, and ease prevail." Wordsworth is here attempting to give scientific expression to a popular opinion which has been greatly misused by poets, novelists, and biographers. It is a theory which will not stand a careful test. We derive most of our ideas about national character from imaginative literature, which has been too often coloured by this prepossession. One may well hesitate to protest against even the fullest expansion of an idea so fundamental to Wordsworth's philosophy and so beautifully exemplified in his poetry, especially as there is scarcely an imaginative writer in any literature from whom further illustrations might not be drawn; but surely there is such a thing as what we might call "the scenic fallacy."

The inquiry should be based not only upon the testimony of imaginative writers, who are likely to be peculiarly subject to this fallacy, but upon the events of history, upon observation, upon a survey of the arts and

industries, the military and civic performances, the domestic traits, and the languages of various peoples. We children of the nineteenth century like to feel that—

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

We hold in high esteem the doctrine of inherent qualities, and explain them, if need be, by reference to heredity. Yet perhaps Wordsworth proved himself an acute observer and a true philosopher, by emphasizing the effect of environment. It is at least more encouraging to suppose, with him and other faithful children of the eighteenth century, that impressions from outside are more potent than heredity. This theory brings hope of unlimited improvement, of improvement for a far larger number of human beings than those whom heredity can save. Granting that external natural objects affect human character at all, it is evident, from the constant presence of such objects, that if a race remains for many generations under their influence, the effect must show itself. Other things may pass away—economic arrangements, religious beliefs, culture, government, and all—but mountains will still lift up the hearts of men and draw forth their thoughts, however insensibly. Wordsworth's view was profoundly philosophical. The philosophy was, even in this particular instance, that of the Enlightenment. It contained encouragement for those who believed that humanity could be indefinitely improved through changes from without. And at the back of this active faith lay an assurance that man himself, the object of this process, was fit for development, was essentially perfectible.

There is nowhere in Wordsworth's prose writings a plainer expression of his democratic principles than the part of his letter to Wilson which deals with that young man's objections to "The Idiot Boy." It occurs in a passage so weighty with disregarded truth that it should be carefully read. Moreover, it is pleasant to think of Wordsworth unbosoming himself so modestly and yet

so confidently to his unknown correspondent, and in terms so eloquent:

"You begin what you say upon 'The Idiot Boy' with this observation, that nothing is a fit subject for poetry which does not please. But here follows a question, Does not please whom? Some have little knowledge of natural imagery of any kind, and, of course, little relish for it; some are disgusted with the very mention of the words pastoral poetry, sheep or shepherds; some cannot tolerate a ghost or any supernatural agency in it; others would shrink from an animated description of the pleasures of love, as from a thing carnal and libidinous; some cannot bear to see delicate and refined feelings ascribed to men in low conditions in society; because their vanity and self-love tell them that these belong only to themselves and men like themselves in dress, station, and way of life; others are disgusted with the naked language of some of the most interesting passions of men, because either it is indelicate, or gross, or vulgar; as many fine ladies could not bear certain expressions in 'The Mother' and 'The Thorn,' and, as in the instance of Adam Smith, who, we are told, could not endure the ballad of 'Clym of the Clough,' because the author had not written like a gentleman. Then there are professional and national prejudices for evermore. Some take no interest in the description of a passion or quality, as love of solitariness, we will say, genial activity of fancy, love of nature, religion, and so forth, because they have little or nothing of it in themselves; and so on without end. I return then to the question, Please whom? or what? I answer, human nature as it has been and ever will be. But where are we to find the best measure of this? I answer, from within; by stripping our own hearts naked, and by looking out of ourselves towards men who lead the simplest lives and most according to nature; men who have never known false refinements, wayward and artificial desires, false criticisms, effeminate habits of thinking and feeling, or who, having known these things, have outgrown them. This latter class is the most to be depended upon, but it is very small in number. People in our rank in life are perpetually falling into one sad mistake, namely, that of supposing that human nature and the persons they associate with are one and the same thing. Whom do we generally associate with? Gentlemen, persons of

fortune, professional men, ladies, persons who can afford to buy, or can easily procure books of half-a-guinea price, hot-pressed, and printed upon superfine paper. These persons are, it is true, a part of human nature, but we err lamentably if we suppose them to be fair representatives of the vast mass of human existence. And yet few ever consider books but with reference to their power of pleasing these persons and men of a higher rank; few descend lower, among cottages and fields, and among children. A man must have done this habitually before his judgment upon 'The Idiot Boy' would be in any way decisive with me. I *know* I have done this myself habitually; I wrote the poem with exceeding delight and pleasure, and whenever I read it I read it with pleasure."

Some idea of the seclusion in which the poet lived may be gathered from a letter to Francis Wrangham, written early in 1801, in which he remarks that he has not yet seen the second volume of "Lyrical Ballads," although it has been out a month. "We live," he says, "quite out of the way of new books. I have not seen a single one since I came here, now thirteen months ago." He excuses himself for not going to visit his friend at his parsonage at Hunmanby in Yorkshire, because he is not strong enough to walk, and too poor to ride. Hunmanby is not far from Gallow Hill, where he and his brother John had lately spent three weeks with Mr. Hutchinson, their farmer friend. "Mr. Hutchinson's house," he adds, "is kept by his sister, a woman who is a very particular friend both of my sister and myself. If ever you go that way it would be a great kindness done to me if you would call on them, and also at any future period render them any service in your power: I mean as to lending Miss Hutchinson books, or when you become acquainted with them, performing them any little service, *auprès de Monsieur ou Madame Langley* [Mr. Langley was Mr. Hutchinson's landlord] with respect to their farm. Miss Hutchinson I can recommend to you as a most amiable and good creature, with whom you could converse with great pleasure."

CHAPTER XV

HAPPINESS AND WORK

THE great fragment of "The Recluse," which was not all published until 1888, was composed between the end of January and the third week of April, 1800. Wordsworth's reason for setting it aside during his lifetime, after which he intended that "The Prelude" should be printed, was that he hoped to complete the entire "edifice" of which they were to form parts. One magnificent passage he did use, however, in the Preface to "The Excursion," 1814; another, which to be sure sounds unlike the Wordsworth of 1800 and quite in his later and inferior manner, appeared in 1823 with the title "Water Fowl"; and two delightful extracts were published by his heirs in 1851, lines which begin "On Nature's invitation do I come" and "Bleak season was it, turbulent and wild." A temporary subsidence of creative power in 1801, his marriage and other events in 1802, and an impulse to write on local and patriotic subjects which seized him thereafter, caused him to lay aside "The Prelude" until the following year. He found time, however, even in 1802, to compose much of the first two books of "The Excursion." However—and this is a point upon which too much emphasis can scarcely be laid—his political sentiments were still unsettled, and it was impossible for him to proceed, at such a time, with a poem so deeply concerned with politics as "The Prelude." Early in 1801 Coleridge wrote to Poole that he was so much disheartened by "our pestilent commerce, our unnatural crowding of men in cities, and our government by rich men," that he would like to go and settle near Priestley in America if Wordsworth would go with him and they could persuade one or two farmer friends to accompany them. And to Southey

he suggested migrating to the island of Nevis in the West Indies: "I and my family, and you and Edith, and Wordsworth and his sister might all go there and make the Island more illustrious than Cos or Lesbos. . . . Wordsworth would certainly go if I went. By the living God, it is my opinion that we should not leave three such men behind us."

In 1801 and the first half of 1802 the antagonism between Wordsworth's Revolutionary hopes and his patriotism had by no means come to an end. Had he not still retained some of his old sympathy with France, he could not have admired Fox, he could hardly even have kept in friendly relations with Poole. Preliminaries of peace were signed, on October 1, 1801, in terms on the whole disadvantageous to England. France was allowed to retain most of her conquests in Europe. The republics founded by France were recognized. The wars of the Revolution appeared to have come to an end; and we must remember that it was the wars of the Revolution, rather than the principles of the Revolution, that distressed Wordsworth. A great philosophical and cosmopolitan movement had degenerated into an appeal to national feeling, into a lust for conquest. This process seemed at last to have been checked, at whatever cost to his own country. His rapidly diminishing faith in the Revolution must have revived a little. His disillusionment was delayed for a year.

When the treaty of Amiens was finally concluded, in March, 1802, Thomas Poole immediately began to prepare for a visit to the country which had so long provoked his curiosity and aroused his sympathy. A few weeks later he was in Paris, calling on Thomas Paine and on Helen Maria Williams, the Godwinian novelist and Girondist. The peace lasted till May, 1803. During this time Wordsworth, as we shall see, availed himself also of the opportunity to visit France. In the interval, however, it was made plain to him, as to almost all the world, that Napoleon was faithless to the Revolution, and that he had reduced France to bondage. In August, 1802, the tyrant was made Consul for life,

with power to appoint his successor. Immediately there was a change for the worse in French foreign policy. The new Italian "republics" were transformed into satrapies; "agitations" in Switzerland were allayed by a French army; "the chaos of Germany," as Victor Duruy puts it with perhaps unconscious irony, "was simplified" by giving church and municipal property into the hands of princes subservient to the conqueror. An attempt was made to recover Santo Domingo, whence the French brought back nothing except the heroic captive Toussaint l'Ouverture. There was no lack of provocation on either side, and in May, 1803, war between France and England broke out again. This time the very existence of Great Britain as an independent nation was threatened. And the menace came from an undisguised tyranny. Now the conflict of opposed sympathies in Wordsworth's mind was stilled; his duty stood out plain. A great epoch of his life came to an end. Although he continued to be a poet of political ideas, a poet of national and large social interests, the impulse of his thought was to flow henceforth from a different direction. For him the early nineteenth century, with its reactions, its panics, its distrust in rationalism, its backward-looking to the Middle Ages, its checking of the high-hearted Renaissance, began during the ominous pause that followed the treaty of Amiens, when "*ce siècle avait deux ans.*" It was in a sense the negative side he went over to, the timid Tory side. Perhaps that was a more satisfactory choice than if he had thrown himself into the current of what was then deemed the progressive movement, the middle-class industrial movement, in which the clear and unimpaired strain of Revolutionary philosophy was scarcely to be recognized. High conservatism, with its historic background, and bold radicalism, with its appeal to the future, are both of them fit air for poets to breathe, but the thick and low-creeping atmosphere of a policy whose only object is to increase the wealth of a nation can only asphyxiate art of every kind.

For yet another reason, the year 1802 marked the

end of old things and the beginning of new in the life of Wordsworth, for this year is a breathing-place in the march of English literature. One stage had just been finished; another was about to begin. The death of Erasmus Darwin, following close upon that of Cowper in 1800, Burke in 1797, and Burns in 1796, served to remind men that a great generation, with many sources of mutual understanding, had stopped at the threshold of the inn. Apart from Wordsworth and Coleridge, poetry at least seemed poorly represented in the company that was preparing to set forth again. Southey wrote "works," but failed to represent fresh ideas or to stimulate. He was, in spite of all his efforts, out of touch with life, and a notable example of how little mere literary industry avails unless the writer's heart is on fire with some kind of flame, infernal or divine. The slight performances of Thomas Moore were just what might have been expected in an interval between great acts of the intellectual drama. By the end of the year, it is true, a literary event of the utmost importance had occurred, but one the significance of which was not at that time readily grasped: Scott's "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" had begun to issue from the press. But "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," first of his poetical romances, was not to appear until three years later, and "Waverley" not till 1814. Crabbe was too old to make any really new poetical venture. Blake had written most of his Lays and Visions, and was henceforth to body forth his conceptions in design. It was a propitious moment for pronouncing an eloquent apology for poetry and uttering a fresh and arresting opinion on poetical technique. This Wordsworth had done, and now, when the political contradictions in his heart had ceased to torture him, he entered upon a new era of poetic productiveness.

There was another side to his life in the quiet year 1801—the idyllic. It is beautifully described in his sister's Journal. Her brief notes touch chiefly upon the infinite details of nature, her brother's work, her perfect love of him, and the mysterious depths of her affection

for Coleridge. One learns from her what a boundless source of delight there is in the life of *things*. It is not merely that she happened to be dwelling in one of the loveliest and most varied regions in all the world; she would have discovered wonders anywhere. She had eyes to see and a soul to comprehend. Her curiosity was as intense as Gilbert White's of Selborne, though, of course, she had no scientific purpose or method. Love was her only impulse in all she did. There is an almost complete absence of the kind of reflection which is commonly called "religious." She apparently felt no need of an historical revelation. She listened continually to a great theodicy. Her daily life was worship. In service to those about her, in sharing their burdens, lightening their cares, looking after their welfare and happiness, she found abundant exercise for her sense of duty. With self-control equal to her brother's, she refrained from speculating about what was most painful or inexplicable in her experience. There is hardly a phrase in her Journal that could be called sentimental, though of wild joy and of sorrow and disappointment the traces are not few. We prate about communion with nature and about the healing touch of nature. Here was a young woman of thirty who really sought and found companionship, strength, restoration, and joy, in nature. Sometimes the hand of conscious art is visible in what she writes; we perceive that she is making studies of scenes and incidents with a view to providing material for her brother. More often she puts down artlessly what she sees, for its own sake, as one instinctively plucks a beautiful spring flower.

Of her deliberate pictures, nothing could be more delicate in its union of quick observation with imaginative understanding, or more exquisite in literary form, than the following passage:

"*Tuesday, 24th* [*October*, 1801].—It was very windy, and we heard the wind everywhere about us as we went along the lane, but the walls sheltered us. . . . As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance perhaps of 50 yards from our favourite birch-tree.

It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water. The sun went in, and it resumed its purplish appearance, the twigs still yielding to the wind, but not so visibly to us. The other birch-trees that were near it looked bright and cheerful, but it was a creature by its own self among them."

She gives us more than one instance of her brother's extreme sensitiveness to impressions. Here is something he would have been too reticent to tell the world. One evening there came "bad news from poor C. [C. is always Coleridge]: William went to John's Grove. I went to find him. Moonlight, but it rained. . . . He had been surprised, and terrified, by a sudden rushing of winds, which seemed to bring earth, sky, and lake together, as if the whole were going to enclose him in. He was glad he was in the high road." More often it is the old story of his exhaustion after composing poetry, such as the record on December 23: "William worked at 'The Ruined Cottage' and made himself very ill;" or later, on February 2, 1802: "William wished to break off composition, but was unable, and so did himself harm. . . . After tea I read aloud the eleventh book of 'Paradise Lost.' We were much impressed and also melted into tears. The papers came in soon after I had laid aside the book—a good thing for my Wm."

Her gift, perhaps unmatched outside Japan, of making a nature poem with the smallest possible number of words, can be seen in such a passage as this: "Attempted Fairfield [the great mountain behind Grasmere], but misty, and we went no further than Green Head Gill to the sheepfold; mild, misty, beautifully soft;" or this: "The snow hid all the grass, and all signs of vegetation, and the rocks showed themselves boldly everywhere and seemed more stony than rock or stone." She described minutely the travellers who stopped at their door or whom they met in the road, beggars, peddlers, gipsies, discharged sailors, and other wanderers. This, we feel sure, was done for William's sake.

Mary Hutchinson was a guest at Dove Cottage during almost the whole of the last three months of the year 1801, and part of that time her brother Tom was there too. Coleridge had his room there, coming without warning and departing with reluctance. But the restless fit was on him. He could never stay long with his family at Keswick, even when his friends were only fourteen miles away and he might visit them as long as he pleased. He was racked with physical pain and mental distress. The opium habit held him by this time tight in its clutches, and I have very little doubt Wordsworth, though perhaps no one else, knew what was the matter. He was ashamed of not making a better provision for his family. He was more than ashamed of not giving to the world a fuller harvest of his genius. He persuaded himself that in London, under the dsicipline of an engagement to furnish a daily article to some newspaper, he might recover command of his powers. And beyond London he pictured to himself the strong personality of Thomas Poole. And so, with money sent by Poole, he set out, November 10, on this desperate adventure. The Wordsworths understood its perils. They knew what anguish drove him forth, and how his loving heart would suffer the moment his back was turned. They knew how dependent he was upon such bodily comforts, such counsel, and such spiritual control, as they had been wont to give him. And they would miss him. On that day Dorothy wrote:

"Poor C. left us, and we came home together. We left Keswick at 2 o'clock, and did not arrive at Grasmere till 9 o'clock. I burnt myself with Coleridge's aqua-fortis. [He had been dabbling in chemistry, as much out of friendship with Davy as out of curiosity.] C. had a sweet day for his ride. Every sight and every sound reminded me of him—dear, dear fellow, of his many talks to us, by day and by night, of all dear things. I was melancholy, and could not talk, but at last I eased my heart by weeping—'nervous blubbering,' says William. It is not so. Oh, how many, many reasons have I to be anxious for him!"

Her solicitude never slept. Nearly every day she mentions writing to the absent friend or hearing from him.

November 11: "Put aside dearest C.'s letters." November 16: "I am going to write to Coleridge and Sara. Poor C.! I hope he was in London yesterday." November 20: "In the evening we had cheerful letters from Coleridge and Sara." November 21: "We walked in the morning, and paid one pound and 4d. for letters. William out of spirits."* November 22: "We wrote to Coleridge." November 24: "We had a note from Mrs. C., with bad news from poor C.—very ill." November 25: "I baked bread, and wrote to Sara Hutchinson and Coleridge." December 3: "I wrote a little bit of my letter to Coleridge." December 4: "I finished the letter to Coleridge, and we received a letter from him and Sara.† C.'s letter written in good spirits. A letter of Lamb's about George Dyer with it." December 6: "In the afternoon we sate by the fire: I read Chaucer aloud, and Mary read the first canto of 'The Fairy Queen.' After tea Mary and I walked to Ambleside for letters. . . . It was a sober starlight evening. The stars not shining as it were with all their brightness when they were visible, and sometimes hiding themselves behind small greying clouds, that passed soberly along. We opened C.'s letter at Wilcock's door. We thought we saw that he wrote in good spirits, so we came happily homewards, where we arrived 2 hours after we left home. It was a sad, melancholy letter, and prevented us all from sleeping."

The next day they rose by candlelight and set off in rain and snow to Keswick to see Mrs. Coleridge and the children, in order, doubtless, to be able to tell Coleridge how they were. This time they rode, and Dorothy

* No wonder! Postage, which was very high, was paid by the recipient, and was a heavy tax on intelligence. Some of the richest people enjoyed the franking privilege. Many peculiar circumstances in the correspondence of that time can be readily understood if we remember these facts. Coleridge suggested a computation of the domestic loss, the crippling of talent, and the injustice, occasioned by this unfair burden.

† This refers to Sara Hutchinson. It is to her, and not to Mrs. Coleridge, that the name is applied in the Journal, where she is often mentioned in connection with Coleridge. He, it would seem, wrote to her frequently at this time, and she passed his letters on to the Wordsworths.

was not too tired on her return to write to him late at night. December 9: "I finished a letter to C." On the 12th she and William and Mary went out together, and she noted: "The birches on the crags beautiful, red brown and glittering. The ashes glittering spears with their upright stems. The hips very beautiful, and so good! and, dear Coleridge! I ate twenty for thee when I was by myself. I came home first. They walked too slow for me." This is the only allusion she makes to the love-affair going on before her eyes. Her innocent girlish action when she was by herself shows where her own heart was.

December 13: "The boy brought letters from Coleridge, and from Sara. Sara in bad spirits about C." December 14: "Wm. and Mary walked to Ambleside in the morning to buy mousetraps. . . . I wrote to Coleridge a very long letter while they were absent." December 18: "I wrote to Coleridge." "Monday, 21st, being the shortest day, Mary walked to Ambleside for letters. It was a wearisome walk, for the snow lay deep upon the roads, and it was beginning to thaw. I stayed at home. Wm. sate beside me, and read 'The Pedlar' [*i.e.*, part of "The Excursion"]. He was in good spirits, and full of hope of what he should do with it. He went to meet Mary, and they brought four letters—two from Coleridge, one from Sara, and one from France. Coleridge's were melancholy letters. He had been very ill. We were made very unhappy. Wm. wrote to him, and directed the letter into Somersetshire. I finished it after tea. In the afternoon Mary and I ironed." December 22: "We were very sad about Coleridge." December 23: "Mary wrote out the Tales from Chaucer for Coleridge." December 25: "*Christmas Day* [her thirtieth birthday]. We received a letter from Coleridge. His letter made us uneasy about him. I was glad I was not by myself when I received it." December 26: "Poor Coleridge, Sara, and dear little Derwent [Coleridge's child], here last year at this time. After tea we sate by the fire comfortably. I read aloud 'The Miller's Tale.' Wrote to Coleridge. . . . Wm. wrote part of the poem to Coleridge."

On Monday, December 28, William, Mary, and Dorothy, set off on foot to Keswick with some cold

mutton in their pockets. This they reinforced with roasted apples and the smell of Christmas pies at Wythburn Inn. They had been invited to visit Thomas Clarkson, the abolitionist, who lived at Eusemere, at the northern end of Ullswater. Spending a night at Greta Hall with Mrs. Coleridge and the children, they pushed ahead next day, looking back at "dear Coleridge's desert home," and thinking of him. Mary spent the next day with them at Mr. Clarkson's, and then went on to her relatives in Penrith, six miles farther, but returned on January 3 to bring letters from Sara and Coleridge. She was with the party again from the 17th to the 22nd. The Clarksons were an extremely friendly couple, Mrs. Clarkson having a fund of old-fashioned stories and being a woman of a very romantic and imaginative temperament.

William and Dorothy returned to Grasmere, without Mary, on January 23, 1802. To anyone acquainted with Grisedale Pass, her record of the journey is full of interest. They set out on the same horse, accompanied by Mr. Clarkson, from whom they parted on the Ullswater side at one o'clock; and then, on foot, through rain and hail and snow, lost at times in the clouds, and guided by William's skill, which needed no visible track, they toiled on, till they reached a point whence they saw the vale of Grasmere, when the mists broke away, looking "soft and grave, of a yellow hue." At home, in their own snug nest, they gazed about them and felt that they were happy.

And thus ended a season of comparative unproductiveness for Wordsworth. We must remember that it included a great part of his courtship. His sister says nothing about this; it must have given her a mingled sense of unselfish pleasure and painful apprehension. She foresaw that the day of her felicity might be near its close.

Immediately on this return to his old home and to a life of entire seclusion with his sister, Wordsworth entered upon a period of ardent and successful composition, which lasted, with few and short interruptions,

until 1807. Fully half of the published extracts from Dorothy's Journal were written in the one year 1802. We have, therefore, uncommonly full and accurate knowledge of the origins of the poems written in that year. In the case of no other great poet has the personal background of his work been so completely revealed—the incidents that suggested it, the purposes that inspired it, the methods that gave it form; for no other poet has had such a companion. The record begins with frequent statements that William was "tired with composition," a good sign, for it means that he was driven by inspiration. He was working at "The Excursion." They were on friendly terms, however, with the humble folk who lived near them, the carters and carriers who passed their door, and the dwellers on remote farms. Every few days they helped some poor wayfarer plodding between the seacoast and the inland towns. They listened to the tale of distress, shared their plain meal with the hungry, and gave of their scanty money to the poor. Newspapers were few, and were carefully kept on file.

Occasionally, to Dorothy's relief, William "wasted his mind in the Magazines." They read little, however, except Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson, if we may judge from her jottings. Jonson's short poems were "too interesting for him," she tells us, "and would not let him go to sleep." They dipped into a box of books that came from London, trying Fletcher and Thomas Fuller and Smollett. Dorothy studied German and attempted to translate (into verse, perhaps) some of Lessing's fables. She sometimes wrote snatches of poetry, but was dissatisfied with the result. Now and then came a "heart-rending letter from Coleridge." His growing estrangement from his wife was the more lamentable because she had no very positive faults and he was devoted to the children. No doubt, in his saddest letters he dwelt on this subject and on his health. It required infinite patience to receive his complaints with sympathy, and a boundless supply of energy to encourage and counsel him. To the outer

world Wordsworth appeared in later life impassive. What strikes one most forcibly in reading his sister's Journal is the extreme sensibility of them both. A melancholy letter from their friend made them ill. Reading a fine passage in Milton melted them to tears.

William composed under demonic influence, and at such times Dorothy withdrew to suffer in silent fear. Her "apprehensions came in crowds." The intensity of his feelings was redoubled when they passed into her less robust heart. It has always been said by the Wordsworth family and their intimate friends—and I have heard it said myself by one who knew both her and her brother*—that the cause of her mental breakdown in later life was the physical strain she endured in taking long walks. Her outdoor life would seem rather to have preserved her from breaking down sooner, for it was inevitable that such quivering sympathies, such lively feelings, should play havoc. She never spared herself, and the truth is that her brother blindly allowed her not only to share his own intellectual pains, but to do too much of the humbler toil of copying his poems and writing his letters. In default of social dissipation, the only thing that preserved both him and her from complete prostration was constant bodily exercise, accompanied, as it was, with interest in the details of what they saw. She suffered, no doubt, from doing so much household work, in addition to long tramps and the intense intellectual life she lived. Many a time, though wearied with mental exertion and exhausted from household business, she started for walks of many miles, but the walks themselves were the least part of the danger. The question of how far her spiritual balance was overthrown by the strain of controlling her feelings about Coleridge is too delicate to be discussed. What could be more affecting—or more alarming, the intensity of her nature considered—than her eager watching for his letters and the grief they usually called forth? Coming home one evening from the post-office at Ambleside or Rydal, she writes: "We broke the seal

* Miss Arnold of Fox How.

of Coleridge's letters, and I had light enough just to see that he was not ill. I put it in my pocket. At the top of the White Moss I took it to my bosom—a safer place for it."

Mary Hutchinson was still at Penrith. Her lover had not seen her for nearly a month, but one Sunday morning, February 14, "the fine day pushed him on to resolve," and after some persuasion, it seems, from his sister, "off he went in his blue spencer and a pair of new pantaloons fresh from London." He returned two days later, and "had only seen Mary H. for a couple of hours between Eamont Bridge and Hartshorn Tree." He brought back the story of "Alice Fell," which had been told him by Mr. Graham, a friend of Clarkson's, who "urged him to put it into verse for humanity's sake." Dorothy at once wrote out the incident in full, and about a month later the poem was composed. Through January and February great pains were taken in revising and completing "Peter Bell." But "The Pedlar"—*i.e.*, "The Excursion"—was their main concern for many months, and a typical entry in the Journal is as follows: "I was so unlucky as to propose to rewrite 'The Pedlar.' Wm. got to work, and was worn to death."

On March 4 William Calvert sent a servant with horses, and Wordsworth went to Keswick for a visit of several days, leaving a supply of fresh pens and some poems put in order for writing by his faithful amanuensis. His back was no sooner turned than she began to long for him. "I *will* be busy," she writes; "I *will* look well and be well when he comes back to me. O the Darling! here is one of his bitten apples. I can hardly find it in my heart to throw it into the fire. . . . I walked round the two Lakes, crossed the stepping-stones at Rydale Foot. Sate down where we always sit. I was full of thought about my darling. Blessings on him." This was put in the Journal less than three hours after his departure, and she wrote him a letter that night and received one from him next day. He brought home two new stanzas of "Ruth." Within a week, it is a

pleasure to know, he wrote the exquisite lines "To a Butterfly," beginning "Stay near me—do not take thy flight," which contain a touching reminiscence of their childhood at Cockermouth, and must have made her fond heart melt with happiness. In the meanwhile he had been working at "The Singing Bird," later called "The Sailor's Mother," a poem which followed "nearly to the letter" a story told him by a woman he had recently met near their cottage. He was also writing the poem now called "Beggars," and then known as "The Beggar Woman and the Beggar Boy." For this he used the very minute account of an incident narrated in Dorothy's Journal nearly three years before. "I read to William," she says, "that account of the little boy belonging to the tall woman, and an unlucky thing it was, for he could not escape from those very words, and so he could not write the poem. He left it unfinished, and went tired to bed. In our walk from Rydale he had got warm with the subject and had half cast the poem." Again she tells how "William kindled and began to write." She was often in a trembling ecstasy, between joy and pain, but there were long intervals of tranquil time, filled, as one could wish all of life to be filled, with a well-balanced proportion of physical and intellectual effort. Her brother was more independent, but had fewer resources outside of his own mind.

On March 18 a stir was in the air. Coleridge had arrived in the north. Wordsworth seems to have gone out on that day and the next to look for him, but he came to Dove Cottage unexpectedly, when it was raining so hard that Dorothy "did not wish for nor expect him." She writes: "His eyes were a little swollen with the wind. I was much affected by the sight of him. He seemed half stupefied." This would seem to show that she did not yet suspect the real cause of his peculiar appearance.

The grand talks of old recommenced, with a dispute about Ben Jonson, but after Coleridge had gone to bed, his friends sat up till four o'clock, and Dorothy adds:

"My spirits were agitated very much." Possibly William on this occasion enlightened her as to Coleridge's condition.

Their wonderful visitor stayed only two days, returning to his family at Keswick. The result of the reunion at Dove Cottage was a strengthening of his self-control, and, as usual, an increase of productive energy and versatility in Wordsworth. The latter wrote "The Cuckoo" a day or two after Coleridge left them, one of his most musical poems—"O blithe new-comer, I have heard"; and before the week was out, he followed it with the lines, of similar joyousness and melody:

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky,

and began, on "a divine morning," an ode, which must have been no other than the great "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood."

But something of Coleridge's restlessness had remained with them, for this glorious activity was interrupted on March 28 to begin a round of visits. Going first to Calvert's, near Keswick, where they met the Coleridges, they spent a week on the way to Thomas Clarkson's, and here Dorothy remained eight days, while her brother went to the Hutchinsons in Yorkshire. On April 13 he returned, having composed and written "The Glow-worm"—*i.e.* the lines beginning "Among all lovely things my love had been." The poet's nephew, in the "Memoirs" (Vol. I., p. 186), quotes from a letter, now lost, written by Wordsworth to Coleridge in April, 1802: "The incident of this poem took place about seven years ago between my sister and me." The verses were printed in 1807, but never again during Wordsworth's lifetime, which is remarkable, considering their beauty. They belong among the mysterious "Lucy poems." In her Journal, under date of the 20th, Dorothy, however, records with great particularity that he wrote them on horseback, on the 12th, near the town of Staindrop, "on Monday, 12th April, 1802." It is very unusual for her to be so exact in giving a date.

They walked home from Eusemere, by way of Kirkstone Pass, on the 15th and 16th. On the first of these days they saw the "host of golden daffodils" which suggested the lovely poem, "I wandered lonely as a cloud"; and on the second day, at the foot of Brothers Water, Dorothy "found William writing a poem descriptive of the sights and sounds we saw and heard," which must have been the joyous lines:

> The cock is crowing,
> The stream is flowing, etc.

The place has not changed. The bridge, bristling with rue and spleenwort, still spans the rushing brook where William sat, and one can follow the shady path up which Dorothy strolled to have a peep at the arched windows of Hartsop Hall. Every particular of the clear-cut little poem remains as it was. How exactly the brother and sister saw things! The depth of their feelings can be measured by the truth of their perceptions. The precision of their expressions was due to the intensity of their experience, and this was intense because it was simple.

The poem on the daffodils was not written until many months afterward, but, with the very great exception of its musical form and its indwelling thought, so amply illustrating "the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement," its elements are present in Dorothy's description, to which he no doubt turned. This is the *locus classicus* in her whole Journal, and is so often quoted to show the co-operation of their minds that I almost hesitate to copy it once more:

"When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads

on these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway."

Two days after their return to their own cottage and orchard, Wordsworth wrote the quaint little poem, somewhat in Blake's manner, called "The Redbreast Chasing the Butterfly." "We left out some lines," says his sister, as if she associated herself with him in its authorship. That week Coleridge, as usual, came to them. He "repeated the verses he wrote to Sara." "I was affected by them," we read in the Journal, "and in miserable spirits. The sunshine, the green fields, and the fair sky made me sadder; even the little happy, sporting lambs seemed but sorrowful to me." What poem was this? Professor Knight conjectures, but apparently without any evidence, that it may have been "the first draft of Dejection, an Ode, in its earliest and afterwards abandoned form." Probably it has not been preserved. We must again remind ourselves that the Sara from whom letters were constantly arriving, and often in connection with Coleridge's, and of whom, for example, Dorothy writes, during this visit of his, "We wished for Mary and Sara. . . . C. received a letter from Sara," was Sara Hutchinson. While Sara Hutchinson belonged to the inmost circle, poor Mrs. Coleridge's company was never sought by the Wordsworths, for its own sake, and rarely indeed by her husband. An entry in the Journal for May 6 reads: "When we came in we found a magazine, and review, and a letter from Coleridge, verses to Hartley, and Sara H."

Whoever thinks it necessary to *see* the discord and misery of Coleridge's home life has only to read that portion of his long letter to Southey written July 29, 1802,* in which he refers to Mrs. Coleridge's "inveterate

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 389.

DOVE COTTAGE FROM THE ORCHARD

From a photograph by Walmsley

habits of puny thwarting and unintermitting dyspathy." They were an ill-mated pair, each no doubt trying to make up for an enormous disparity of tastes by repentances and sacrifice, which resulted in frequent reconcilement but no permanent happiness.

On April 20 Wordsworth had added to his poem "To a Butterfly" the lines beginning "I've watched you now a full half-hour," which have always been published separately, and have been improperly dated in a Fenwick note. After Coleridge's visit, which lasted five days, he composed "The Tinker"* and the lines entitled "Foresight." He was evidently, as his classification later goes to prove, trying to put into permanent form as many as possible of his childhood recollections, and this is one of the Poems referring to the Period of Childhood. On April 30 and May 1 he wrote "The Celandine," published in 1807 as two separate poems. On May 3 he began to compose "The Leech Gatherer," known also by the less interesting title "Resolution and Independence," and continued it next morning. None of his poems exhausted him more than this, and no wonder, for it gave an outlet to those fears which nowhere else escaped him—fears of poverty, of futility, of madness even. In few of his poems does he attain so great perfection of form. In none is there a figure so elaborate and yet so finished as the double simile of the huge stone, "like a sea-beast crawled forth." Considering the scrupulous principles of his art, his extreme care to preserve the lineaments of truth in every detail, and to harmonize the form of his poems to the particular mode they were intended to express, it is plain that this poem must have cost him dear in both emotion and artistic effort. Before it was finished, Coleridge joined them again, at the Rock of Names,† between Grasmere and Keswick, and they had an afternoon

* It is in Nowell C. Smith's edition, III. 423.

† The initials W. W., M. H., D. W., S. T. C., J. W., and S. H., were carved on a rock by the shore of Thirlmere. Owing to the change of level when the lake was made into a reservoir, this precious memorial was taken down and replaced at a higher point. Unfortunately, it was much damaged in the process, but some of the letters may still be seen.

together. From him, perhaps, was caught the tone of melancholy, from which Wordsworth's other poems, written that happy spring-time, were conspicuously free. On May 7 Dorothy records that her brother "fell to work at The Leech Gatherer; he wrote hard at it till dinner-time, then he gave over, tired to death—he had finished the poem." His high-strung condition betrayed itself next day, for when she read "Henry V." to him in the orchard he wept. And the poem was not so soon finished, after all, for on the 9th he worked at it "almost incessantly from morning till tea-time." "I was oppressed," she says, "and sick at heart, for he wearied himself to death." But this time it was really done, and she copied it and other poems for Coleridge.

As usual, however, Wordsworth, still in the glow of completing one task, began another, and that same evening he "wrote two stanzas in the manner of Thomson's Castle of Indolence, and was tired out." The day closed with bad news from Coleridge. The two stanzas were no doubt a portion of that enigmatical poem beginning "Within our happy Castle there dwelt One." Considering the playful tone of these verses, it is astonishing to read of the toil Wordsworth bestowed on them. "William is still at work," his sister writes next day, "though it is past ten o'clock; he will be tired out, I am sure. My heart fails me." That night he could not sleep, but on the third day she records that he "finished the poem about C. and himself."

Coleridge came again on the 12th. "We sate up," the Journal says, "till one o'clock all together, then William went to bed, and I sate with C. in the sitting-room (where he slept) till a quarter past two o'clock." When Coleridge was not with them, there was an almost daily interchange of letters. His were melancholy, and caused great uneasiness. For example, on May 15 Dorothy writes: "We had a melancholy letter from Coleridge at bedtime. It distressed me very much, and I resolved upon going to Keswick the next day." She went, alone, on the 17th, and spent two days, Coleridge bringing her halfway home on the 19th. They found

him again beside the Keswick road, on the 22nd, "sitting under Sara's rock." He poured out his heart about his private affairs, and came home with them for two days. He was with them again from June 9 to 12.

My belief that Wordsworth's love for France and sympathetic interest in her affairs still persisted receives support from the sonnet beginning "I grieved for Buonaparté," which is doubtless one of the two referred to as follows on May 21: "William wrote two sonnets on Buonaparte, after I had read Milton's sonnets to him"; and also more strongly from a remark, under date of February 8: "Coleridge's letter somewhat damped us. It spoke with less confidence about France." Coleridge had completely gone over to the side of "patriotism." The sonnet seems at most to express grief that a nation should expect true guidance from a man trained in battles, but there is a noticeable absence of hostility to France. It was printed in *The Morning Post* for September 16, 1802, unsigned, and on January 29, 1803, with the initials W. L. D., and incorrectly dated 1801 in Wordsworth's editions of his poems.

On June 18 came news that Lord Lowther intended to pay the debt due to their father. Immediately letters on this subject were despatched to Coleridge, Mary Hutchinson, and Richard Wordsworth, the brother in London. The poet, now obliged to attend to business, and realizing that he was no longer too poor to marry, hastened away to Eusemere to consult his experienced friend Clarkson. One can imagine the excitement at Dove Cottage in his absence: a letter from Basil Montagu, who seems to have been their adviser in money matters, and one from Richard, bewildering the poor girl so that she "could settle to nothing"; her brother Christopher to be informed; recourse to Shakespeare to steady herself; and then in comes Coleridge, for whom she must cook supper and make ready a room. But she was not too tired to sit up and hear him talk till one o'clock. He came again, before the end of the month and the letters went back and forth as usual.

CHAPTER XVI

MARRIAGE

In June Wordsworth wrote the gay and humorous lines beginning "The sun has long been set," which contain an allusion, I think, to one of Charles Lamb's eulogies of London life as compared with country pleasures, and wrought at the great Intimations Ode. He also sent an elaborate reply, as we have seen, to John Wilson, of Glasgow. But what seems to have busied him most was the touching poem composed in anticipation of leaving Grasmere and breaking up the old life with his sister, the lines beginning "Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain ground." The time had come when he was able to marry. There is no reason to doubt the reality of his affection for Mary Hutchinson. Nothing in his existing letters, however, or in Dorothy's Journal, gives the slightest indication that, up to this time at least, it had risen to the height of a passion. Surely if his soul had been possessed with an overwhelming happy love, his sister, so unselfish, so observant, so exact and unflinching in what she wrote, would have revealed the fact. This poem is not the cry of an eager lover, but rather the farewell of a man reluctant to give up a blessed certainty of happiness, almost an apology to the sister who has been the companion of his past, and a promise that the future shall see as little change in their life as possible.

On the evening of July 8 poor Dorothy wrote in her Journal: "O beautiful place! dear Mary, William. The hour is come. . . . I must prepare to go. The swallows, I must leave them, the wall, the garden, the roses, all. Dear creatures! they sang last night after I was in bed; seemed to be singing to one another, just before they settled to rest for the night. Well, I must

go. Farewell." And on July 9 they set out together for the Hutchinsons' place, Gallow Hill, near Scarborough, Yorkshire. Coleridge was watching for them at Sara's Rock. They spent two nights at Keswick, and had a melancholy parting with their friend. On the way to Eusemere, where they stayed two days with the Clarksons, they lingered and loitered that they might be alone. On the 16th they reached Gallow Hill, having travelled partly by post-chaise and partly on foot.

And now, instead of marrying his betrothed, what did this strange lover do, after a visit of ten days, but start off to France with his sister! To an attentive reader of the Journal, this is not so surprising as it might be to one who had failed to observe certain mysterious allusions, and a few words in a letter written by Dorothy to Mrs. Marshall, November 30, 1795, shortly after her arrival at Racedown. "William," she says, "has had a letter from France since we came here. Annette mentions having dispatched half a dozen, none of which he has received." In her Journal on December 21, 1801, she mentions the receipt of a letter from France. On January 26, 1802, she says: "Wm. wrote to Annette." On February 13 there came a letter "from the Frenchman in London," and on the 15th "a letter from Annette." Under date of February 22 we find: "Wm. brought me 4 letters to read—from Annette and Caroline, Mary and Sara and Coleridge;" and on February 24 "Wm. wrote to Annette." On March 22 we find the following entry, in which going to Mary is connected with seeing Annette: "A rainy day. Wm. very poorly. 2 letters from Sara and one from poor Annette. Wrote to my brother Richard [a rare occurrence]. We talked a good deal about C. and other interesting things. We resolved to see Annette, and that Wm. should go to Mary." On the 26th "Wm. wrote to Annette." As we saw, Wordsworth went into Yorkshire early in April.

And now, in July, leaving Mary on the 26th, they went, by way of Hull, Lincoln, and Peterborough, to London, where they arrived on the 29th. Two days later, "after various troubles and disasters," they left

London on the Dover coach at half-past five or six. "It was a beautiful morning," she wrote. "The city, St. Paul's, with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke, and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light, that there was even something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles." It was in this hour that Wordsworth began to compose the famous sonnet, one of his earliest, beginning "Earth has not anything to show more fair." In his own editions he mistakenly states that it was composed September 3, but in the Fenwick note he says it was "written on the roof of a coach, on my way to France."

Sailing from Dover that night, they reached Calais at four o'clock on Sunday morning, August 1. Dorothy's brief account of this visit, which appears to have been confined to Calais, was not written until her return to Grasmere. Nothing is said as to its purpose. "We found Annette and C." she writes, "chez Madame Avril dans la Rue de la Tête d'or. . . . We walked by the seashore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or William and I alone. . . . One night I shall never forget—the day had been very hot, and William and I walked alone together upon the pier." She describes the scene, and adds, as if she and William had not really been alone: "Caroline was delighted." This was probably the occasion of his writing the sonnet, "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free," and the "dear Child! dear girl!" that walked with them there, "untouched by solemn thought," is, of course, not his sister, who was only too easily affected by such sights. The seven other sonnets composed at or near Calais during this sojourn are all of a political character, and a close examination of them discloses the trend of Wordsworth's feelings on the great subject which had run like a deep undertone through all his adult life. The Consulship for life was granted to Napoleon on August 2. By the 7th the news had reached Calais, and on that day

Wordsworth wrote his remonstrance to the "men of prostrate minds" who had thus demonstrated their proneness to slavery, the sonnet beginning "Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind." On the same day, "on the road leading to Ardres," he composed the sonnet beginning "Jones! as from Calais southward you and I," in which he contrasts the high hopes, the songs, garlands, mirth, banners, and happy faces, of the time "when faith was pledged to new-born Liberty" with the disheartened state of the French now. He distinctly avers, however, that he himself has not given up. "Despair," he sings,

> Touches me not, though pensive as a bird
> Whose vernal coverts winter hath laid bare.

France had been, indeed, his vernal covert. These two lines, however, were substituted in 1827 for the original, which indicate even more clearly the undaunted attitude of his mind, and are as follows:

> Yet despair
> I feel not: happy am I as a bird:
> Fair seasons yet will come, and hopes as fair.

On Napoleon's birthday, the 15th, he composed the sonnet beginning "Festivals have I seen that were not names." He compares the present apathy with the sublime though senseless joy he had witnessed "in a prouder time," and concludes:

> Happy is he, who, caring not for Pope,
> Consul, or King, can sound himself to know
> The destiny of Man, and live in hope.

His revolt against the Napoleonic tyranny shows itself again in the glorious sonnet "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic," in that upon "The King of Sweden," and in that "To Toussaint l'Ouverture." And, by a natural return of the mind to his own country, whose white cliffs by day and lighthouses at night reminded him that she was unconquered, he felt a new-born pride in her, which he expressed in the sonnet beginning "Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west."

The sway which France had so long held in his heart was now broken. The abasement of her people before a man who represented in a fresh form the bondage they had thrown off, only a few years before, lowered them in his eyes. France no longer seemed to him the champion of liberty. England, in comparison, was a land of freedom. Henceforth he founded his affections upon his own country. Whatever its result, the visit to Calais was undoubtedly undertaken for the sole purpose of making a settlement with Annette, and bidding farewell to her and the child, who was now nine years old.

On Sunday, August 29, exactly four weeks after their arrival at Calais, the Wordsworths sailed back to Dover, where they sat upon the cliffs and "looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought," as Dorothy records. They reached London the next day. We catch a glimpse of them in a letter from Charles Lamb to Coleridge dated September 8, in which he says: "The Wordsworths are at Montagu's rooms, near neighbours to us. They dined with us yesterday, and I was their guide to Bartlemy Fair." The Lambs had been in the Lake country during the Wordsworths' absence, visiting Coleridge. They had stayed a day or two at Dove Cottage, together with the Clarksons, although the inmates were away, and had only just returned to London, as we learn from a letter of Lamb to his friend Manning, dated September 24. In the same letter he says: "The Wordsworths were gone to Calais. They have since been in London, and past much time with us: he is now gone to Yorkshire to be married to a girl of small fortune, but he is in expectation of augmenting his own in consequence of the death of Lord Lonsdale, who kept him out of his own in conformity with a plan milord had taken up in early life, of making everybody unhappy." In her Journal, Dorothy Wordsworth records that she and her brother stayed in London till Wednesday, September 22, and arrived at Gallow Hill on Friday. In a letter from this place to Mrs. Marshall, dated September 29, only part of which has ever been printed, she

says they were detained in London by a succession of unexpected events—the arrival of their brother Christopher, then of their brother John. The latter had recently returned from a long voyage, and was preparing to sail again in November. The former, now a Cambridge fellow, was deeply engaged in classical and theological studies. Business matters connected with the restitution of their property no doubt required their presence in London with their elder brother Richard. This seems to have been the first occasion on which the whole family were together since their childhood. Two days of this time Dorothy and William spent with their uncle and aunt Cookson at Windsor.

The poetical mood which had come upon Wordsworth at Calais persisted during the three weeks of his sojourn in London. Without abating one jot of his political principles, he acknowledges, in a second group of sonnets, that France had ceased to follow true liberty: he asserts the soundness and strength of British character; he laments the luxury which rendered England's wealth a menace to herself; he warns his countrymen that nations can be great and free only by the soul.

Like the hearty countryfolk they were, the Hutchinsons gathered to meet their friends at Gallow Hill. When the Wordsworths arrived, on September 24, "Tom was forking corn, standing upon the corn-cart." Mary and Sara and Joanna were at home, and the party was joined presently by Jack and George. None of Wordsworth's brothers appear to have come for his wedding. What his emotions upon this occasion were he has given us no means of knowing. Those of his sister are easy to divine from her letter to Mrs. Marshall of September 29 and the passage in her Journal covering the marriage day. Renunciation, a sober and reasoned willingness, and a brave effort to be cheerful, are what we find in them. She was making a great sacrifice. The day of her felicity had begun to decline.

"My dear Jane," she writes,—"If this letter reaches you before next Monday, you will think of me travelling towards our own dear Grasmere with my most beloved

brother and his wife. I have long loved Mary Hutchinson as a sister, and she is greatly attached to me; this being so, you will guess that I look forward with perfect happiness to this connection between us; but, happy as I was, I half dread that concentration of all tender feelings past, present, and future, which will come upon me on the wedding morning. There never lived on earth a better woman than Mary H., and I have not a doubt that she is in every respect formed to make an excellent wife to my brother, and I seem to myself to have scarcely anything left to wish for, but that the wedding was over and we had reached our home once again. We have indeed been a long time absent; it was, however, a delightful thing to us to see all our brothers, particularly John."

In her Journal, Dorothy gives the following less restrained account of the wedding day:

"On Monday, 4th October, 1802, my brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson. I slept a good deal of the night, and rose fresh and well in the morning. At a little after eight o'clock I saw them go down the avenue towards the church. William had parted from me upstairs. When they were absent, my dear little Sara prepared the breakfast. I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer, and threw myself on the bed, where I lay in stillness, neither hearing nor seeing anything till Sara came upstairs to me, and said, 'They are coming.' This forced me from the bed where I lay, and I moved, I knew not how, straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me, till I met my beloved William, and fell upon his bosom. He and John Hutchinson led me to the house, and there I stayed to welcome my dear Mary. As soon as we had breakfasted we departed. It rained when we set off. Poor Mary was much agitated when she parted from her brothers and sisters, and her home."

Dorothy's record of the journey back to Grasmere is unusually full, but of remarks about fields, and woods, and ruins, rather than her own feelings or the behaviour of her companions. They travelled all three together in a post-chaise, reaching Grasmere on the third evening.

Part of their course was the same she and her brother had followed nearly three years before, on their memorable walk into the Lake country. "When we passed through the village of Wensley," she says pathetically, "my heart melted away, with dear recollections—the bridge, the little waterspout, the steep hill, the church. They are among the most vivid of my own inner visions, for they were the first objects that I saw after we were left to ourselves, and had turned our whole hearts to Grasmere as a home in which we were to rest."

A remarkable proof of Wordsworth's capability of abstraction and an almost distressing evidence of placidity is the fact that after the first day's journey he composed a sonnet, on a sunset, and on the next morning another on the captivity of Mary, Queen of Scots, in Bolton Castle. By a well-merited fate, neither was successful. He thought so himself in the case of the second.

This is not the place to attempt to form an estimate of Mrs. Wordsworth's character. Suffice it to say that she was a good woman, tender, self-sacrificing, and kind; that she was not only accomplished in household arts, but sufficiently intellectual to be extremely useful to her husband on the mechanical side of authorship; that she made him happy, and that all who knew her well, throughout a long and active life, loved and honoured her. If the courtship was strikingly devoid of romantic elements, the marriage proved to be, in every domestic sense, prosperous. Mary Hutchinson was born August 16, 1770, at Penrith.

I must here refer to the doubt as to whether Mrs. Wordsworth or someone else was the subject of the lines beginning "She was a Phantom of delight." The poet told a nephew of Coleridge in 1836 that the poem "was written on 'his dear wife,'" and Bishop Wordsworth was at some pains to insist on this view in the "Memoirs." We have also the testimony of Henry Crabb Robinson, in his Diary for May 12, 1842, that the poet told him the verses were on his wife. On the other hand we have the following passage in Harriet Martineau's affectionate

article on Mrs. Wordsworth, in her "Biographical Sketches": "In the 'Memoirs of Wordsworth' it is stated that she was the original of 'She was a Phantom of delight,' and some things in the next few pages look like it; but for the greater part of the Poet's life it was certainly believed by some who ought to know that that wonderful description related to another, who flitted before his imagination in earlier days than those in which he discovered the aptitude of Mary Hutchinson to his own needs."

Miss Martineau was a neighbour of the Wordsworths in their old age; and though she complained of the narrowness of their circle, and the language above cited is possibly a little sarcastic, her tone when writing of them is generally very respectful.

On Wordsworth's wedding day, Coleridge printed in *The Morning Post* his touching poem "Dejection: an Ode." He doubtless chose that date out of compliment to his friend. The history of this poem is very interesting. It was composed on April 4, 1802, when William and Dorothy Wordsworth were visiting him at Keswick. On the 3rd the two poets had made an ascent of Skiddaw. Coleridge was at this time in one of the most terrible throes of his losing struggle against pain and despondency. His mysterious and no doubt very real ailment assumed Protean forms of torture. The habit of taking opium was fixed upon him. Natural joy, to which his fine organization made him peculiarly susceptible, was now seldom his. And he knew that this loss meant the end of poetic inspiration. He was deeply conscious of his failure as a husband and father. Self-control, and with it self-respect, had gone. But with a sweetness of soul and a beautiful absence of envy, for which we cannot too much honour him, he rejoiced that what he lacked his friend possessed. With no mere selfish dependence, but quite disinterested satisfaction, he virtually said of Wordsworth, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He leaned upon Wordsworth. It was probably Wordsworth's will-power, more than his own, that held him so long in the North at this time, trying to do his duty

to his family, trying to overcome his frailty, trying to benefit by the restorative influence of nature.

It would not have been like him to conceal the poem from his friends. They shared his sorrows; they should also share this "timely utterance," which, we may hope, gave relief to his feelings of gratitude and satisfaction to his artistic sense. In the original manuscript, the word "William" stands where "Lady" and "Otway" stand in the poem as finally published. As printed in *The Morning Post* it was in an intermediate state. The sixth and part of the seventh stanzas, as we have them now, were omitted, and "William" was changed to "Edmund." He made the change merely out of respect for Wordsworth's natural desire for privacy, and signed the poem with the Greek phonetic equivalent of his own initials, ΕΣΤΗΣΕ. By the time he published "Sibylline Leaves," in 1817, a cloud had come between him and his friend, and the further changes were made for this reason.

Anyone who has studied the Prefaces to "Lyrical Ballads" and Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria" will perceive that this poem is a confession of unfaithfulness to the "great task of happiness." In those treatises the principle is definitely laid down that happiness is the source and purpose of poetry. After describing the wonders of night, the poet cries "I *see*, not *feel* how beautiful they are," and, carrying out this complaint, he laments:

> My genial spirits fail;
> And what can these avail,
> To lift the smoth'ring weight from off my breast?
> It were a vain endeavour,
> Though I should gaze for ever
> On that green light that lingers in the west;
> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

Coleridge's revolt from the sensational psychology of Locke and the other masters of his earlier thinking, and a clear trace of the philosophic idealism to which he was becoming more and more attached ever since he was drawn to the study of Kant, are trans-

muted into their classical artistic expression in the fourth stanza:

O William! we receive but what we give,
And in *our* life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world, *allow'd*
To the poor loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
O pure of heart! Thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be?
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
  Joy, virtuous William! joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Joy, William! is the spirit and the pow'r,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dow'r,
  A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamed of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
  We, we ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

This inward power, this "shaping spirit of Imagination," he himself, he cries, has lost, but Wordsworth, the pure of heart, has kept the charm, and the poem concludes:

O William, friend of my devoutest choice,
O rais'd from anxious dread and busy care,
By the immenseness of the good and fair
Which thou see'st everywhere,
Joy lifts thy spirit, joy attunes thy voice,
To thee do all things live from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of thy living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
O lofty Poet, full of life and love,
Brother and friend of my devoutest choice,
Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice

A clearer vision of the truth no man ever had. It was a vision of the kind that comes only to one who has failed, in the hour when all illusion is torn from the soul. But the very humility that enabled Coleridge thus to prefer his friend was itself a glory. By losing himself he found himself, and this one ode would suffice to confer upon him "titles manifold," of poet, man, and Christian.

One month after this composition Wordsworth began "Resolution and Independence," not, we may well believe, without a deep consciousness that he was developing some of the thoughts suggested by Coleridge's ode. The forebodings of poverty, insanity, and death, in Wordsworth's poem, were not without foundation in a depressed state of mind. He was suffering from the strain of composition and other difficulties that had presented themselves during the past year.

The community of spirit between these two great men had now for some time been at its height. On Wordsworth's part it involved putting up with a thousand little inconsistencies and disappointments. In Coleridge it was based on a general acknowledgment of his own moral and even intellectual inferiority, an inferiority which he was quicker to feel and express than anyone else. In neither case did it involve any of those compromises, degrading or soul-saving according to the motive that prompts them, which form the working basis of most friendships. They were frank and independent men, to whom it never occurred to trifle with the truth in any matter of literary, political, or philosophic principle. This accounts for the seeming ruthlessness of Wordsworth's references to Coleridge's contributions to "Lyrical Ballads," and also for the freedom with which Coleridge judges his friend's theory of poetry. Their mutual admiration was so deep, their loyalty to each other was so strong, their general agreement on the essential principles of what most concerned both of them was so well founded, that they thought they had nothing to fear from any whole-hearted utterance. And, indeed, though temporary estrangement

was to come later, nothing ever destroyed the profound respect they felt for each other's intellectual powers, or the desire to help each other, or the love that bound them together in spirit. Wordsworth, with the command he had won upon his naturally impetuous disposition, restrained his tongue and his pen from any expression of bitterness, almost from any utterance of impatience. Coleridge behaved like a saint. But, as I have said, they were quite outspoken when criticizing one another's works. In a letter to W. Sotheby, dated Keswick, July 13, 1802, Coleridge wrote:

"I was much pleased with your description of Wordsworth's character as it appeared to you. . . . The word 'homogeneous' gave me great pleasure, as most accurately and happily expressing him. I must set you right with regard to my perfect coincidence with his poetic creed. It is most certain that the heads of our mutual conversations, etc., and the passages, were indeed partly taken from notes of mine; for it was at first intended that the preface [to "Lyrical Ballads"] should be written by me. And it is likewise true that I warmly accord with Wordsworth in his abhorrence of these poetic licenses, as they are called, which are indeed mere tricks of convenience and laziness." And yet, he declares, "poetry justifies as poetry, independent of any other passion, some new combinations of language, and *commands* the omission of many others allowable in other compositions. Now Wordsworth, *me saltem judice*, has in his system not sufficiently admitted the former, and in his practice has too frequently sinned against the latter. Indeed, we have had lately some little controversy on the subject, and we begin to suspect that there is somewhere or other a radical difference in our opinions. *Dulce est inter amicos rarissima dissensione condere plurimas consentiones*, saith St. Augustine, who said more good things than any saint or sinner that I ever read in Latin."

A further adumbration or promise of "Biographia Literaria" occurs in a letter to Southey, July 29, 1802, in which Coleridge describes a projected volume, "Concerning Poetry and the characteristic merits of the Poets, our contemporaries":

"Although Wordsworth's Preface is half a child of my own brain, and arose out of conversations so frequent that, with few exceptions, we could scarcely either of us, perhaps, positively say which first started a particular thought (I am speaking of the Preface as it stood in the second volume), yet I am far from going all lengths with Wordsworth. He has written lately a number of Poems (thirty-two in all), some of them of considerable length (the longest one hundred and sixty lines), the greater number of these, to my feelings, very excellent compositions, but here and there a daring humbleness of language and versification, and a strict adherence to matter of fact, even to prolixity, that startled me. His alterations, likewise, in 'Ruth' perplexed me, and I have thought and thought again, and have not had my doubts solved by Wordsworth. On the contrary, I rather suspect that somewhere or other there is a radical difference in our theoretical opinions respecting poetry; this I shall endeavour to go to the bottom of, and, acting the arbitrator between the old school and the new school, hope to lay down some plain and conspicuous, though not superficial, canons of criticism respecting poetry. What an admirable definition Milton gives, quite in an 'obiter' way, when he says of poetry, that it is '*simple, sensuous, passionate!*' It truly comprises the whole that can be said on the subject. In the new edition of the L. Ballads there is a valuable appendix, which I am sure you must like, and in the Preface itself considerable additions; one on the dignity and nature of the office and character of a Poet, that is very grand, and of a sort of Verulamian power and majesty, but it is, in parts (and this is the fault, *me judice*, of all the latter half of that Preface), obscure beyond any necessity, and the extreme elaboration and almost constrainedness of the diction contrasted (to my feelings) somewhat harshly with the general style of these Poems, to which the Preface is an introduction."

We cannot be too grateful for that phrase, "Verulamian power and majesty." The passage just quoted contains the germ of Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria," which, together with Wordsworth's Preface, constitutes the most original, philosophic, and reconstructive work in modern literary criticism, until the publication of Tolstoi's "What is Art?" which puts the whole subject

on a broader basis. The fifth, sixth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters, which are the marrow of Tolstoi's startling book, contain a new evangel of criticism. As between Wordsworth and Coleridge, it is important to note that the former, though a stiffer and more practical nature, was the innovator, the iconoclast, the radical, both in theory and in practice; while the latter, a dreamer, a person reckoned irresponsible, was full of hampering misgivings and retrospective qualifications. He stood aghast at Wordsworth's audacity, and thought him ruthless. Wordsworth's consistency, the homogeneity which Coleridge praised, was the very essence and warrant of his greatness. We can well dispense with the praise of those who commend his less characteristic beauties at the expense of his true grandeur, who profess to allow him the title of a major poet because he has sometimes equalled Milton in Miltonic qualities or anticipated the refinements of Tennyson. Take from Wordsworth's poetry all its lines of Virgilian elegance, of Tennysonian grace, of Miltonic majesty, and you will still have, in what is left, the true Wordsworth, the central, unmistakably personal qualities of which the rest is but a far circumference, dull and wan in some quarters, splendid enough in others, but not always bound to the midmost point by a true radiation.

To act as arbitrator between old and new schools, not in literary criticism only, but in every other department of philosophy, came to be more and more Coleridge's office. His enormous reading and his quickly inflamed historical sympathy made him see things from more than one side, which was well, but kept him from seeing any one side steadily, which was unfortunate. He thus became in his later years, and was already becoming when he wrote that letter, the first of nineteenth-century reactionaries, and one of the very few really great men who had recourse to mysticism as a check to rational thought. Wordsworth's mysticism, if indeed it can be so called, was of the imagination rather than the reason; it spent itself in "Tintern Abbey," the "Intimations" Ode, and other works of his poetic prime, and did not

pass over into the religious philosophy of his later age. If he was then orthodox, his orthodoxy was Christian rationalism, not Christian mysticism, and, perhaps, neither rational nor mystical Christianity. It must be admitted that as a moderator in criticism Coleridge made some sensible practical amendments to Wordsworth's theory. And what he wrote for the world in "Biographia Literaria" can be only a hundredth part of the wise counsel he gave Wordsworth in private. Moderators of opinion are often useful, but the glory or the shame belongs to partisans. In this case, in spite of Coleridge's assertion and the truth of his assertion, that the Preface was half a child of his own brain, its warrior sire was Wordsworth.

So close was the mutual dependence of the two poets in 1802 and 1803 that we must revert for a moment to the former year, and note that, whether for good or ill, Coleridge was absent from the Wordsworths for many weeks. After their departure in July, he plucked up enough resolution to make a very jolly nine days' tour alone, visiting Buttermere and Wastdale, and climbing Scafell. From early in November till Christmas Eve he was away, most of the time in Wales with Thomas Wedgwood. On that day he turned up at Grasmere, and heard of the birth of his daughter, born the previous morning. Wedgwood had come north with him, and was staying at Glenridding, on Ullswater. Kirkstone Pass now took the place of Dunmail Raise as the barrier to be surmounted every few days. But before long Coleridge had gone to London, where he spent some time, until well into April, with the Lambs. He was in their house when Mary Lamb had one of her relapses into madness. On his departure he entrusted to Charles Lamb the task of seeing his forthcoming edition of poems through the press. His sufferings from neuralgia, or whatever his mysterious and painful disease may have been, kept his mind fixed on a foreign residence, in a southern climate, in Portugal, Malta, the West Indies, Madeira, even Hungary; but poverty and irresolution held him fast. It was probably his restlessness, more

than Wordsworth's fondness for travel, that first made them think of the next step they took together, their tour in Scotland. The first intimation we have of this occurs in a letter from Coleridge to Southey in July, 1803; apropos of a projected "Bibliotheca Britannica," he asks: "If I go into Scotland, shall I engage Walter Scott to write the history of the Scottish poets?" There is only one of Wordsworth's poems of which it is fairly safe to say that it was written in the spring of 1803, and that is "The Green Linnet," which certainly shows no trace of restlessness, but, on the contrary, a "settled low content."

Yet we must admit that he was capable of yielding at about the same time to a very different mood, if his own ascription of the lines beginning "It is no spirit who from heaven hath flown" is correct. They express an ambition of the most sky-reaching kind. Wordsworth seldom gives way to a certain impulse to which not a few of the so-called Romantic poets of a slightly later time yielded, often with entire lack of reserve. Byron, Shelley, Hugo, did not hesitate to announce their belief in themselves as superior beings. Wordsworth was a match for any of them in pride, but so carefully does he in general restrain himself that we feel a shock on reading these verses. The sons of Zebedee might not so much have displeased the other disciples if their request had not been out of keeping with the general humility of their demeanour. The piece is a bold aspiration after eminence and unreproved freedom. The poet beholds the evening star shining alone while yet it is broad daylight, and is startled with the thought that perchance he may thus some day stand detached from his fellow-mortals. That the verses were inspired by earthly ambition, and not, as some have supposed, by a longing for heaven, is especially plain in one of the variant readings of lines 9-12—viz.:

> O most ambitious Star! thy presence brought
> A startling recollection to my mind
> Of the distinguished few among mankind,
> Who dare to step beyond their natural race.

About this time he also wrote a much greater poem, the verses to little Hartley Coleridge, six years old, which begin "O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought." The small group of poems in which Wordsworth directly addresses living persons among his friends are almost all of superior quality, serious, exquisitely elaborated, and show an intimate and loving knowledge of the persons to whom they are dedicated. A kind of epigrammatic perfection is attained in the prophetic lines:

> I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
> Lord of thy house and hospitality;
> And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest
> But when she sate within the touch of thee.

This figure of Grief, as an obtrusive lover, not to be got rid of, not able to take herself away from her victim, haunts the mind as a thing seen and shuddered at.

Metrical and other similarities, together with coincidences of time and place, indicate that the poem was originally a part of the "Intimations" Ode, into which it fits perfectly between the seventh and the eighth stanzas. It is true, as Professor Garrod has pointed out, that the line "O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought" is found, under a slightly earlier date, in Coleridge's notebook; but this does not prove that it was not first uttered by Wordsworth.

Thomas De Quincey, at that time an unwilling schoolboy of seventeen, was even more completely carried off his feet by "Lyrical Ballads" than John Wilson had been. On May 31, 1803, he wrote to the author through Longman and Rees, the publishers. The letter did not reach Wordsworth till July 27. Some boyish charm, heightened by contrast with precocity of judgment, it must have had, for Wordsworth answered it at once, and in terms of great kindness, even inviting his unknown correspondent to visit him. But, evidently in reply to a too enthusiastic overture, he gives him a warning which De Quincey long afterwards had occasion to remember: "My friendship it is not in my power to give. This is a gift which no man can make; it is not

in our power. A sound and healthy friendship is the growth of time and circumstance. It will spring up and thrive like a wild-flower when these favour, and when they do not, it is in vain to look for it." In this letter he announces: "I am going with my friend Coleridge and my sister upon a tour into Scotland for six weeks or two months. . . . Most likely we shall set off in a few days."

CHAPTER XVII

TOUR IN SCOTLAND

And set off they did on August 14, although Mrs. Wordsworth had on June 18 given birth to a son, who was named John.

The Scottish tour has been as adequately described as any journey ever made. It furnished Wordsworth with subjects for more than a dozen poems, Coleridge with grievances and pleasures for some wonderful letters, and Dorothy with material for an unsurpassed book of prose description. Her "Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland" were written after their return, from copious notes taken day by day. The Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals were memorials for her brother and herself only; these fuller and more finished pages were intended to serve the further purpose of entertaining the wider family circle. Fragments of them were printed in the "Memoirs," and the book as a whole was published for the first time by Principal Shairp, in 1874, and again by Professor Knight, in 1904. In style it is a perfect model of simple, natural, and effective English. There is here absolutely no literary affectation. A very great effort is made to describe things accurately, but the writing evidently differs in no respect from the language Dorothy Wordsworth would have employed in telling the tale orally, except that it is, of course, more deliberate and careful. The freedom permitted by this form of composition enabled her to show her interest in a wide range of subjects—gardening, agriculture, architecture, economic conditions, national and local traits, incidents of human life, customs, dress, peculiarities of speech, and the emotions excited by all these things in herself and her companions. She shows a lively and good-natured humour combined with ready sympathy,

but, above all, she was interested, and it is evident that her brother was equally interested, in landscape. Her descriptions of the face of the country, whether in close detail or in larger aspects, are, I think, unrivalled. She knew, as Ruskin and many other famous describers have not so well known, how to exclude her feelings and report what her eyes actually saw. Though upon occasion she could, after the manner of her brother and of other poets since the world began, infuse her soul into her senses, and reproduce the impression of "both what they half create and half perceive," she kept the processes distinct, and seems to have worked upon the principle that material truth and imaginative truth should not be blended without due warning.

Though the tour was, in the old-fashioned sense of the term, a sentimental journey, there is not a trace of sentimentality in her account. Even in the presence of ruined monastic buildings, which are wont to awaken lachrymose and futile regrets, she maintains her composure. We are still a long way, in her case at least, from the cult of mediævalism. She is a creature of the eighteenth century, and does not see the past through a mist of tears and romantic doctrine. In general, she reserves her softness for human distress and accepts results of history with a somewhat hard-headed complacency. It requires a magnifying-glass to distinguish either in her or in her brother, up to this time, certain of the characteristic marks of Romanticism—its reactionary view of history, its sentimentality, and its tendency to claim in behalf of the illuminated a morality less rigorous than that which binds the rest of mankind.

Some idea of the conversation while Coleridge was yet of the party may be gained from their remarks upon a great mine-pump, whose arm they observed heaving upward every half-minute. "There would have been something in this object very striking in any place, as it was impossible not to invest the machine with some faculty of intellect; it seemed to have made the first step from brute matter to life and purpose, showing its progress by great power. William made a remark to

this effect, and Coleridge observed that it was like a giant with one idea." Her own observant and contented mind is shown in her remark: "I can always walk over a moor with a light foot; I seem to be drawn more closely to nature in such places than anywhere else; or rather I feel more strongly the power of nature over me, and am better satisfied with myself for being able to find enjoyment in what unfortunately to many persons is either dismal or insipid."

It is amusing to think how little effect the metaphysics of Coleridge had upon her. It is not fanciful to suppose that he must have chafed at the absorbed interest the Wordsworths took in nature solely for its own sake. This interest was not that of mere amateurs; it had a systematic, a professional quality.

As throwing light on Wordsworth's character, his tastes, his personal traits, the "Recollections" are invaluable. The Grasmere Journal shows him amid familiar surroundings, at his ease. In Scotland he was engaged in strange activities, facing all sorts of practical difficulties, and stimulated by fresh impulses every day. What strikes one most, in this account, is his faculty—and his sister's too, for they were as one person in this—for getting at the heart of things. The annoyances and distractions of travel affected them little. Every sunrise was to them the beginning of an adventure, a new life, like the dawn of a child's holiday. It is hardly too much to say that nothing commonplace happened to them during those six weeks. If the sky was blue, that was a miracle; if rain fell and ways were foul, that was wonderful too. They were not real children of the road, however, not free denizens of the world; they carried in their memory a standard for all they saw. They were constantly comparing Scottish lochs with English lakes, Scottish straths with English vales. Just as they measured one or two great rocks with "William's walking-stick," to see if they were as tall as the "bowder-stone" in Borrowdale, so they studied Highlands and Lowlands from a Cumbrian point of view. One is struck with their great physical endurance and their

cheerful acceptance of hardships. They were constantly faced with the possibility of not finding a lodging for the night. William had to sleep more than once in haylofts, and Dorothy on the carriage cushions in a hovel. As for food, they had to put up with what the poor Highlanders happened to have in their huts—porridge, oatcake, and whey, and deemed themselves lucky if search produced a few eggs. A boiled fowl was a boon. More than once they had to wait for their supper among drunken drovers. They showed an admirable power of adapting themselves to circumstances and people, neither holding themselves aloof nor expecting too much. Even in the Lowlands the state of the roads and inns would justify one in calling the country wild. They saw only one stage-coach in all Scotland. The people, both Lowland and Highland, though almost uniformly kind and honest, were often in a condition of material backwardness, the like of which can scarcely be found now anywhere in Europe or America. Coleridge, though he was no mean long-distance walker, suffered from fatigue and privation. The hardier Wordsworths were undaunted. Through mud and rain, across desolate moors and dangerous ferries, they struggled on, and it must have been a wild-looking pair that wandered through Edinburgh High Street towards the middle of September. It is little wonder they remained in the Old Town, avoiding the fashionable crowds of Princes Street.

In specific biographical details the "Recollections" are, of course, very rich, but the little book is so charming that it would be a pity to attempt to cull them out. Every lover of Wordsworth should read the original. I may be permitted, however, to make a few general observations, and to call attention to one or two points which might escape notice.

They set out, Coleridge and William and Dorothy Wordsworth, with one horse and an Irish jaunting-car. It was expected that there would be at least as much walking as driving, and so there was. It was expected also that the three should keep together, but on

August 29, by the shore of Loch Long, "poor Coleridge," to quote Miss Wordsworth, "being very unwell, determined to send his clothes to Edinburgh and make the best of his way thither, being afraid to face much wet weather in an open carriage." Various other reasons, more or less whimsical, but connected generally with the state of his health, have been given by Coleridge himself, who seems to imply that his companions were to blame. He wrote to Poole, October 3, 1803: "Wordsworth himself a brooder over his hypochondriacal sensations, was not my fittest travelling companion." But there need be no mystery about it. The wonder is that he could so long have stuck to a plan and endured so much hardship. The surprise comes when we discover that, instead of turning back, he made a short-cut to the North, outstripping his former comrades, and preceding them over a part of their route. If his report is correct, he walked a prodigious distance, going as far as Inverness.

In "Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers" (p. 205) occurs the following passage:

"Early in the present century, I set out on a tour in Scotland, accompanied by my sister; but an accident which happened to her prevented us from going as far as we had intended. During our excursion we fell in with Wordsworth, Miss Wordsworth, and Coleridge, who were, at the same time, making a tour in a vehicle that looked very like a cart. Wordsworth and Coleridge were entirely occupied in talking about poetry; and the whole care of looking out for cottages where they might get refreshment and pass the night, as well as of seeing their poor horse fed and littered, devolved upon Miss Wordsworth. She was a most delightful person, so full of talent, so simple-minded, and so modest! If I am not mistaken, Coleridge proved so impracticable a travelling-companion that Wordsworth and his sister were at last obliged to separate from him."

It is too bad that the poets should be deprived of such credit as they deserve for their care of "the poor horse." The animal was almost entirely in Wordsworth's charge, who appears to have been the only one of the three

travellers capable of driving. He drove it badly, to be sure, letting it back down hillsides and tangle itself in the harness; but still, he drove. Coleridge never assumed this responsibility, and was wise enough to lead instead of holding the reins. There is more than one touching vision granted us in the "Recollections," of Wordsworth standing guard over "the poor horse" while it ate its corn in tavern-stables, and once he is reported to have tried, though in vain, to unyoke it.

At Dumfries the three travellers visited the grave of Burns and his house, and were stirred to melancholy by the thought which must come to everyone who sees the squalid surroundings amid which so much manhood and genius were smothered. They called to mind his intemperance, and felt oppressed with fear lest his sons, suffering rather than benefiting from his fame, might yield to the same temptations which had beset him. It is a pleasure to observe that the tone of their reflections about Burns was one of sincere and almost humble admiration, qualified only by sorrow for his real faults, and not by any lack of appreciation of his poetic genius or his many virtues. They were, no doubt, like most people at that time, under the influence of Dr. Currie's dismal "Life," and it is not strange that Dorothy should have written, on catching a glimpse of Ellisland, the scene of one of Burns's vain endeavours: "There is no thought surviving in connection with Burns's daily life that is not heart-depressing." Wordsworth felt a poignant regret that he had not known Burns. Dorothy's pages should be read in conjunction with the poem "To the Sons of Burns," if one would appreciate the genuine solicitude of a good man which it expresses. The other poem, "At the Grave of Burns," is the most precious tribute ever paid to Burns, and one of the greatest elegies in our language. It is plainly, too, a cry of personal grief:

> Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
> By Skiddaw seen,—
> Neighbours we were, and loving friends
> We might have been.

Overcome by this thought and by the melancholy surroundings, which forced upon their attention the unhappy side of Burns's life, the three pilgrims withdrew in sadness from the scene, but to Wordsworth's heart of hearts voices of consolation spoke:

> Sighing I turned away; but ere
> Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
> Music that sorrow comes not near,
> A ritual hymn
> Chanted in love that casts out fear
> By Seraphim.

Whether it was that they dreaded the expense, or felt ill at ease in their rustic attire amid townsmen, or cared too much for natural beauty, the travellers stayed only one night in Glasgow and one in Edinburgh. It is singular enough that the Wordsworths should have been willing to leave home at all, considering that little John was but two months old; it is odder still that mention is made only once of their inquiring for letters. They were, apparently, cut off for many days together in the Highlands, and not pursuing always a prearranged course. They gave neither themselves nor their horse a Sunday rest, which must have scandalized the Scots. And, indeed, it does not seem to have been their custom to attend church when at home, or to make any distinction among the days of the week, whether at Racedown or at Alfoxden or at Town-end. The tradition of Wordsworth's church-going habits dates from a much later period. In this connection, it may be observed that Dorothy's Journal up to this time, and the letters of herself and her brother, are noticeably free from the religious musings—I am tempted to say the cant—which were usual in diaries and letters generally throughout the early half of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps Rogers—he knew everybody and was kind to everybody—gave them a letter of introduction to Scott. Lockhart, who got his information partly from a conversation with Wordsworth and hearing him read extracts from Dorothy's Journal, in 1836, says:

"Their common acquaintance, Stoddart, had so often talked to them of each other, that they met as if they had not been strangers; and they parted friends. Mr. and Miss Wordsworth had just completed that tour in the Highlands, of which so many incidents have since been immortalized, both in the poet's verse and in the hardly less poetical prose of his sister's Diary."*

After tearing themselves unwillingly away from Edinburgh and seeing Hawthornden, the house of the poet Drummond, whither Ben Jonson came on foot from London to visit him, the travellers put themselves for six days in "the Shirra's" capable hands. The meeting of Scott and Wordsworth is memorable in literary annals. The wayfarers had risen early, on a fine morning, September 17, and had walked from Roslin through the glen and considerably farther to Lasswade. "Arrived at Lasswade," says the Journal, "before Mr. and Mrs. Scott had risen, and waited some time in a large sitting-room. Breakfasted with them, and stayed till two o'clock, and Mr. Scott accompanied us back almost to Roslin, having given us directions respecting our future journey, and promised to meet us at Melrose two days after." Wordsworth retained a lively recollection of that day. He told Lockhart of it:

"We were received with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except, perhaps, that his animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world. He partly read and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel'; and the novelties of the manners, the clear picturesque descriptions, and the easy glowing energy of so much of the verse, greatly delighted me."

Even without Scott's presence they were to find themselves henceforth under his protection as long as they

* "Life of Sir Walter Scott," II. 160.

remained in Scotland. At Clovenford, for example, Dorothy writes: "On our mentioning Mr. Scott's name, the woman of the house showed us all possible civility. . . . But, indeed, Mr. Scott is respected everywhere; I believe that by favour of his name one might be hospitably entertained throughout all the borders of Scotland." It was at Clovenford that Wordsworth wrote "Yarrow Unvisited." Scott was their guide through Melrose Abbey, having rejoined them on the 19th.

"He was now travelling to the assizes at Jedburgh in his character of Sheriff of Selkirk, and on that account, as well as for his own sake, he was treated with great respect, a small part of which was vouchsafed to us as his friends, though I could not persuade the woman [at the inn at Melrose] to show me the beds, or to make any sort of promise till she was assured from the Sheriff himself that he had no objection to sleep in the same room with William."

At Jedburgh they witnessed some of the official ceremonies in which their new friend was engaged, and when he was free from court duties he accompanied them through part of his beloved border-country, a little way beyond Hawick. Thence they proceeded through Teviotdale to Langholm, Longtown, and Carlisle, and so home, where on September 25, "a beautiful autumnal day," they found "Mary in perfect health, Joanna Hutchinson with her, and little John asleep in the clothes-basket by the fire." Their thoughts had flown ahead of them, and between Dalston and Grasmere Wordsworth had composed the sonnet beginning:

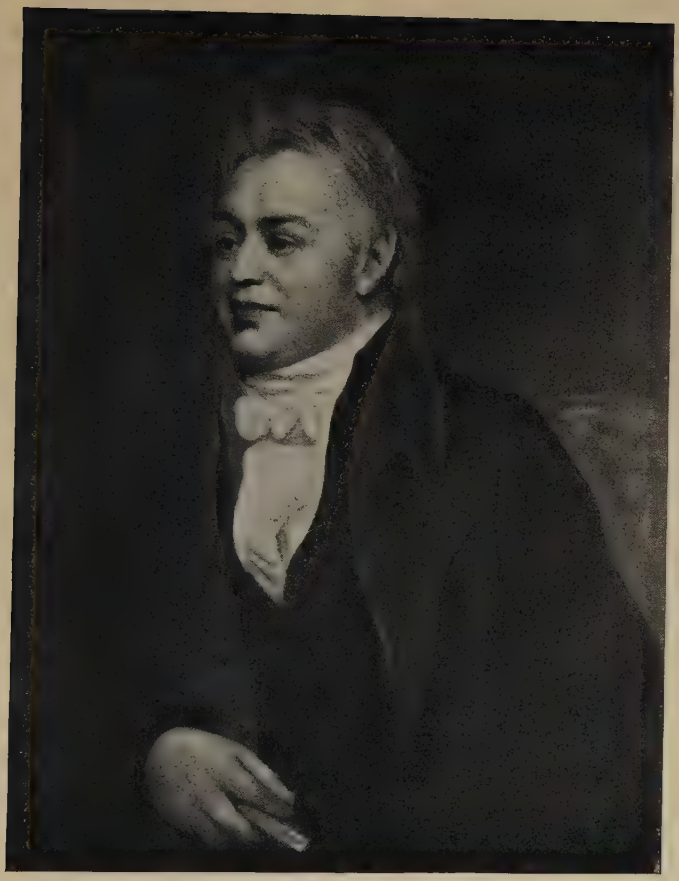
> Fly, some kind Harbinger, to Grasmere-dale!
> Say that we come, and come by this day's light.

Coleridge's story of the separation in the Highlands does not represent it in a very different light from the account given by Miss Wordsworth. In a doleful letter to his wife, written at the Ferry of Ballater about September 1, he complains that he had had an attack of rheumatism in his head at the very place, near Loch

Lomond, where the Wordsworths enjoyed themselves more than in any other part of their tour, the place where they met the "sweet Highland Girl." "And now William," he continues, "proposed to me to leave them and make my way on foot to Loch Katrine, the Trossachs, whence it is only twenty miles to Stirling, where the coach runs through to Edinburgh. He and Dorothy resolved to fight it out. I eagerly caught at the proposal; for the *sitting* in an open carriage in the rain is death to me, and somehow or other I had not been quite comfortable."

In dividing the common fund, the Wordsworths, being two and purposing to make much the longer journey, naturally took the larger share, and Coleridge was left with six guineas, which would have been quite enough to take him back to Keswick had he pursued his original intention. But no sooner was he alone than the sense of liberty revived his spirits, and he set out to see Glencoe and the north of Scotland! "I am now going," he writes, "to cross the ferry for Fort William, for I have resolved to eke out my cash by all sorts of self-denial, and to walk along the *whole line of the Forts*. I am unfortunately shoeless; there is no town where I can get a pair, and I have no money to spare to buy them, so I expect to enter Perth barefooted. I burnt my shoes in drying them at the boatman's hovel on Loch Katrine, and I have by this means hurt my heel. Likewise my left leg is a little inflamed, and the rheumatism in the right of my head afflicts me sorely when I begin to grow warm in my bed, chiefly my right eye, ear, cheek, and the three teeth; but, nevertheless, I am enjoying myself, having Nature with solitude and liberty—the liberty natural and solitary, the solitude natural and free." "I take no opiates," he adds.

On September 10 he wrote to Southey from Edinburgh: "I have walked 263 miles in eight days, so I must have strength somewhere, but my spirits are dreadful, owing entirely to the horrors of every night—I truly dread to sleep. It is no shadow with me, but substantial misery foot-thick, that makes me sit by my bedside of a morning



SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

From a portrait by T. Phillips, R.A., in the possession of Mr. John Murray

and cry." And in this letter he sends Southey the first copy of that heartbreaking poem "The Pains of Sleep," including three pathetic lines which for some reason he left out when he published it in 1816:

> Frail is my soul, yea, strengthless wholly,
> Unequal, restless, melancholy;
> But free from Hate and sensual Folly.

In a second letter to Southey, three days later, he speaks of his dreadful fate: "I am tolerably well, meaning the day. My last night was not such a noisy night of horrors as three nights out of four are with me. O God! when a man blesses the loud screams of agony that awake him night after night, night after night, and when a man's repeated night screams have made him a nuisance in his own house, it is better to die than to live."

Fifteen poems were the fruit of Wordsworth's Scotch tour: "At the Grave of Burns," which was inspired, as we have seen, at Dumfries, and composed in large part before 1807; "Thoughts suggested the Day following on the Banks of the Nith, now the Poet's Residence," which was not finished till 1839; "To the Sons of Burns after visiting the Grave of their Father," composed partly in 1803, and greatly altered in various editions; "To a Highland Girl," composed in 1803, and corresponding with peculiar exactness to the details of an experience related in Dorothy's Journal; "Glenalmain, or The Narrow Glen," composed probably in 1803; "Stepping Westward," composed between 1803 and 1805; "The Solitary Reaper," composed in the same period, and suggested not only by experiences of the poet himself, but more especially, as he acknowledged in a note, by a beautiful sentence in a manuscript of his friend Thomas Wilkinson, the Quaker farmer, entitled "Tours to the British Mountains";* "Address to

* Wilkinson's book was not published till 1824. The sentence, which refers to an incident observed near Loch Lomond, is as follows: "Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sung in Erse, as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more."

Kilchurn Castle," begun in 1803 and finished long afterwards; "Rob Roy's Grave," composed between September, 1803, and April, 1807; a "Sonnet composed at —— Castle," composed September 18, 1803, and enclosed in the letter to Scott already mentioned; "Yarrow Unvisited," composed in 1803; "The Matron of Jedborough and her Husband," composed between 1803 and 1805, though, as Dorothy says, long after seeing the persons described; "Fly, Some Kind Harbinger to Grasmere-Dale," composed September 25, 1803; and "The Blind Highland Boy, a Tale told by the Fireside, after returning to the Vale of Grasmere," a poem suggested long after the tour, but coloured by it in several details, as, for example, in stanzas 12, 13, and 14, which reproduce observations recorded by Dorothy.

The general poetic level of this series is high. Three at least of the number, "At the Grave of Burns," "The Solitary Reaper," and "Yarrow Unvisited," are among Wordsworth's best achievements. Even if they stood alone, they would indicate a remarkably wide range of power. The value of the tour, considered as a stage in Wordsworth's artistic development, is chiefly in the fact that it invited him to a fresh field of observation, unconnected with his past life. Yet, of course, the principles which he had learned to apply to nature and to human life were applicable to this field as well as to the familiar scenes around Grasmere. He could still carry out his central plan of self-development, which was to retain undiminished and uncorrupted the lively feelings of childhood and the pure ideals of youth, while attaching them, by means of manhood's riper knowledge and more deliberate will, to objects of permanent and universal experience. Here and there, in these new poems, we feel something of the freedom and irresponsible gaiety of a happy wayfarer, oftener still the lively and romantic spirit of Scotland. Sentiment, when it is not restrained altogether, is expressed with greater *abandon* by Scots than by the English. Adopting Burns's favourite form of stanza, Wordsworth follows his

example also in opening wide the flood-gate of feeling. Similarly, for "Yarrow Unvisited," he took a reeling kind of Scottish melody, which is heard in several old ballads, and made it carry a certain gay wilfulness foreign to his own, and, indeed, to English character in general.

CHAPTER XVIII

NEW INFLUENCES

BEFORE they set out on the Scottish tour there began to flow into the lives of Coleridge and Wordsworth a new current, which was to modify their attitude towards society and ultimately to alter the tone and even the texture of Wordsworth's poetry. This was the patronage of Sir George Beaumont, a wealthy and generous baronet, who with Lady Beaumont lodged at Coleridge's house in the summer of 1803. He was a man of refinement and taste, interested in all the arts, himself an accomplished though conventional landscape painter, and justly proud of being related to the Elizabethan dramatist Francis Beaumont. At the very beginning of their acquaintance, Sir George bought and presented to Wordsworth a piece of land called Applethwaite, near Keswick, in the hope that the poet would build on it and thus be able to live nearer to Coleridge. It was not until eight weeks later, and then in an awkward and almost ungracious letter, that Wordsworth accepted this gift. But before long the style of his epistles to Sir George became deferential, as his respect for him deepened and his dependence upon him increased. The baronet was older than he by about seventeen years, which may account in part for Wordsworth's departure from his customary manner with other friends, all of whom were about his own age or younger. Sir George was not only hospitable and free-handed to him, but was one of the first persons of high position and large social influence to appreciate his works. Whatever the process and however unconscious it may have been, this relationship with a family of superior wealth and rank soon began to weaken the poet's defiant feeling of independence and, shall we say, to enlarge his social

tolerance. It is painful to be obliged to admit that Coleridge's surrender to the new influence was precipitate and almost abject. Wordsworth kept his feet, though sliding. On the whole it would have been better for them both if they had kept clear of this well-meant but entangling alliance.

Among the first poems that Wordsworth sent to Sir George was the coldly ferocious sonnet "Shout, for a mighty victory is won," written in "anticipation" of the slaughter that awaited the French if they should set foot on British soil. The danger was not wholly imaginary, and the hard logic of events had made him perceive that France by embracing Bonaparte had forfeited her titles to respect and given up her glorious cause. Yet one could wish that the poet had not expressed such sanguinary feelings. It is more to his credit that he actually joined the local volunteers and drilled with them.

Though he was at this time giving up the struggle of eleven or twelve years and accepting the political principles of the dominant classes, he still maintained his isolation in religious opinion.

There is a curious passage in Coleridge's notebook ("Anima Poetæ," p. 29), under date of October 26, 1803, from which it may be inferred that he still considered Wordsworth "a semi-atheist." Evidently the latter refused to assent to the old-fashioned teleological argument for the existence of God, and spoke of nature in such terms as to provoke a suspicion that he was a Pantheist. Coleridge was at this time so weary of speculative wandering, and so eager to make a short-cut to certitude and peace by attributing to God the qualities of a man raised to perfection, which is the well-known process of theology, that it distressed him to find Wordsworth willing to pursue still his old independent course. He writes:

"A most unpleasant dispute with Wordsworth and Hazlitt. I spoke, I fear, too contemptuously; but they spoke so irreverently, so malignantly, of the Divine Wisdom that it overset me. [Here follows a tirade against

Hazlitt.] But *thou*, dearest Wordsworth—and what if Ray, Durham, Paley, have carried the observation of the aptitude of things too far, too habitually into pedantry? Oh, how many worse pedantries! how few so harmless, with so much efficient good! Dear William, pardon pedantry in others, and avoid it in yourself, instead of scoffing and reviling at pedantry in good men and a good cause—even by that very act becoming one. But, surely, always to look at the superficies of objects for the purpose of taking delight in their beauty, and sympathy with their real or imagined life, is as deleterious to the health and manhood of intellect as always to be peering and unravelling contrivance may be to the simplicity of the affection and the grandeur and unity of the imagination. Oh, dearest William! would Ray or Durham have spoken of God as you spoke of nature?"*

Towards the end of 1804 Coleridge's health gave his friends increased anxiety. Dorothy in her letters to Mrs. Clarkson makes an appalling list of his disorders. He thought only a warm climate could restore him to health, and arrangements were made for him to join Stoddart, a friend of Charles Lamb, who had gone out to Malta as King's Advocate. The ever-helpful Poole was in London, and Coleridge, unhappy at home, and eager to go south, started on December 20 to be with him. He had got as far as Dove Cottage when a severe illness brought him low, and he had to remain there, nursed by the Wordsworths, for about three weeks. Once away from his uncongenial wife, he was less in a hurry to reach Malta, and what with an engagement at the *Courier* office, two visits to the Beaumonts at their place in Essex, and much time with several old friends—Tobin, Davy, Godwin, Lamb, and others—he did not sail before April 9. Wordsworth, out of his very slender means, and at a time when his own needs must have been pressing, lent him £100; and lending in this case probably meant giving. Before sailing he had another dreadful attack. The Wordsworths were greatly

* Ernest Hartley Coleridge, writing to me in 1916, said with his customary frankness: "I made a bad blunder in 'Anima Poetæ': it was Derham, not Durham, whom he coupled with Paley. William Derham, 1657-1753, was the author of 'Physico-Reality' and 'Astro-Theology.'"

alarmed. The letters they wrote him in March and April show how they loved him. These are different from their letters to other persons, being full of the tenderest sentiments and most caressing terms.

In a letter to Thomas Wedgwood, written in January, 1804, Coleridge gives an excruciating description of his sufferings in the previous month, and pays a tribute to the Wordsworths which should always be remembered to their credit:

"Wordsworth had, as I may truly say, forced on me a hundred pounds, in the event of my going to Madeira. . . . I stayed at Grasmere (Mr. Wordsworth's) a month, three-fourths of the time bed-ridden; and deeply do I feel the enthusiastic kindness of Wordsworth's wife and sister, who sat up by me, one or the other, in order to awaken me at the first symptoms of distressful feeling; and even when they went to rest, continued often and often to weep and watch for me even in their dreams. I left them January the 14th."

The Wordsworths kept up communication with Coleridge as long as possible in the spring of 1804. In a letter of March 24 to Mrs. Clarkson, Dorothy says:

"Judge, then, how fully we have been employed, what with nursing and the ordinary business of the house, which is really not a little, Molly being far worse qualified for her place as it is at present than formerly, having a deal of irregular work, and also her strength having considerably failed her. Poor lamb! we shall keep on with her as long as we can, for I believe she will be heart-broken when she leaves us. The last letter we had from Coleridge brought us but dismal tidings. [Here follows an account of his illness.] He wrote last Tuesday, and was to go to Portsmouth on Saturday. He was at Sir George Beaumont's in Grosvenor Square, a blessed chance! for Lady Beaumont is as tender in her attentions to him as if she were his sister, and both Sir G. and she are human-hearted creatures, even as if they had been bred up and passed their lives among the best people of our own rank. C. has taken his passage in a ship bound to Venice and Trieste. He is to stop at Gibraltar and touch at Malta, where he will see our friend Stoddart, who has a place there under Govern-

ment, and, with his wife, resides there. C. has not told us what his plans are, but most likely if his health be steady he will travel in Italy and perhaps visit Mount Etna. We expect Mrs. C. and the children at Grasmere after Mrs. Southey's confinement."

Early in 1804 Wordsworth wrote to Wrangham: "I have great things in meditation, but as yet I have been doing little ones. At present I am engaged in a poem on my own earlier life, which will take five parts, or books, to complete; three of which are nearly finished. My other meditated words are a philosophical poem and a narrative one. These two will employ me some, I ought to say several, years; and I do not mean to appear before the world again as an author, till one of them at least be finished." In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, February 13, Dorothy describes the manner of composing "The Prelude": "He takes out the umbrella, and I dare say stands stock-still under it, during many a rainy half-hour, in the middle of road or field!" In a letter of March 6, 1804, to his young admirer De Quincey, then at Oxford, the poet, after recommending the love of nature and books as a means of happiness and virtue, goes on to say that the poem on his own early life will be only tributary to a larger and more important work: "Of this larger work I have written one book and several scattered fragments; it is a moral and philosophical poem; the subject whatever I find most interesting in Nature, Man, and Society, and most adapted to poetic illustration. To this work I mean to devote the prime of my life and the chief force of my mind." On March 24 Dorothy writes to Mrs. Clarkson that she and Mary are making a complete copy of her brother's poems "for poor Coleridge, to be his companion in Italy." "A great addition," she says, "to the poem on my brother's life has been made since C. left us, fifteen hundred lines." On September 8, evidently of the same year, Wordsworth tells Sir George Beaumont: "You will be glad to hear that I have been busily employed lately. I wrote one book of 'The Recluse,' nearly a thousand lines, then had a rest. Last week I

began again, and have written three hundred more. I hope all tolerably well, and certainly with good views." The introduction of "good views" in late stages of composition reduces considerably the biographical value of "The Prelude." It is unfortunate the work was not finished earlier and left untouched. He "tinkered" with it all the rest of his life, tempering its boldness and removing features which he deemed inconsistent with the staid principles of his mature age. On Christmas Day, 1804, he tells Sir George that he has written upward of two thousand verses in the last ten weeks.

The short poems written in 1804 are few, and more than one of them were of earlier inspiration. We have considered the origin of "I wandered lonely as a cloud" and that of "Vaudracour and Julia." Wordsworth later ascribed "She was a Phantom of Delight" and "The Affliction of Margaret ——" to this year. Four lines of the former, he tells us in the Fenwick note, were originally composed as part of the verses on the Highland Girl. "The Affliction of Margaret ——" was originally written for "Lyrical Ballads." From the eighth, ninth, and tenth stanzas we receive an impression of geographical space, a glimpse of supernatural possibilities, and a dread of man's inhumanity, which are characteristic of much of the poetry he composed at Alfoxden.*

The poem beginning "There is a Flower, the lesser Celandine," was ascribed to 1804. It is chiefly remarkable for the poignant pathos of the two lines:

> This neither is its courage nor its choice,
> But its necessity in being old.

On May 8, 1804, Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson: "Poor Coleridge has sailed in the Speedwell."

* After making this conjecture, I was delighted to find that the most acute and accurate of Wordsworth scholars, Mr. T. Hutchinson, says in his edition of the Poems of 1807, Vol. I., p. 173, that "a MS. copy exists, headed 'Affliction of Mary —— of ——; written for the Lyrical Ballads.'" A rejected prologue, of six heroic couplets, was printed by W. Hale White in his "Description of the Wordsworth and Coleridge Manuscripts in the possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman," p. 63.

And again, on July 18, to the same correspondent, she ran on from an animated description of her little nephew to some anxious words about their distant friend. After several ecstatic pages in regard to baby John, she says:

"But, God bless him! he has one grievous fault: he is terribly passionate. . . . The dear Lamb! I call him so, in spite of his impatience, for no Lamb was ever gentler and sweeter or more loving. He hangs about us and hugs us round our necks, and at night, when I go to bed with him, he laughs for joy and puts his sweet little arm round my neck. We have all at this moment (I was called from my writing to see him) been witnessing him climb up the orchard steps. You know what a difficult road it is. Young ladies who are not used to it hobble up and down, though in full health and strength. He went all the way from the new door to the very top of the steps entirely without help, with the utmost caution, yet no cowardice, and never made a false step. You may be sure we followed his heels up the steps. . . . We have had no more news of Coleridge. We now begin to be anxious about him. We are also somewhat anxious about my Brother John, lest he should fall into the hands of the French. . . . William is very well. He begs to be most tenderly remembered to you. He has given himself up to leisure ever since he went to Park House, but he is now going to begin with his poem, and I hope will go on as before. God grant that you may be here next summer. We shall then have the happiness of reading it with you."

The poet's daughter Dorothy—generally known as Dora—was born August 16, 1804. Otherwise, what we may term Wordsworth's personal history, apart from his literary pursuits, was uneventful that year. We catch a few glimpses of home life in Dorothy's unpublished letters to Mrs. Clarkson. The baby Dorothy "is her father's darling, his little pet, and yet he seems as fond of John as it is possible to be." William has had a long interruption from summer company, Mary's confinement, etc., but goes on with his work again. "William and I," she writes on October 14, 1804, "have been on a tour to Ennerdale and Wasdale since Sara left us,

and at our return we found Mr. Montagu and George Dyer. Busy, however, as we have been kept with company, we had no sorrow about their coming—nothing but pleasure. Mrs. Lovel, too, has been with us. [Mrs. Coleridge's sister. Mrs. Coleridge and her children had been at Town-end, too, not long before.] She came unexpectedly, and her we were very glad to see. She is an interesting woman, though of a fretful, unhappy temper." Christopher Wordsworth has lately been married to Priscilla, sister of Charles Lloyd. John Wordsworth, through the interest of Mr. Wilberforce, has just got what he calls "a better voyage"—that is, he does not go to China direct as before. In a letter of January 6, 1805, from Park House, near Ullswater, where Tom and Sara Hutchinson are trying to begin farming again after losing their old farm in Yorkshire, she writes: "It is near seven o'clock, Sunday night. We have just put our two children to bed, and William, Mary, Sara, Joanna, Tom, and George Hutchinson, with Hartley Coleridge, are making a Christmas party round the fire." In a letter of February 10, 1805, she says: "We have built a delightful shed at the top of the orchard [at Town-end]. It is a warm shelter in winter when the frost is not keen. . . . We have no letters from Coleridge, which makes us very anxious about him."

Letters from Coleridge were rare, and finally ceased altogether. To miss his comments on "The Prelude" in the course of composition must have been a grievous loss. Almost all Wordsworth's energy was being directed towards the completion of that work. He reached his goal in the summer of 1805. Most of the short poems composed that year have some relation to the great domestic bereavement which darkened it. This is the more apparent if we remark that the joyous lines "To a Skylark," "Up with me! up with me into the clouds!" which their author afterwards ascribed to 1805, were probably written in 1801; and that "The Waggoner," its author's longest and most successful attempt at what may, broadly, be called "humour," was perhaps written a year later than has been supposed.

Of the remaining poems, the "Ode to Duty" may well have sprung from a mind tempered by reflection upon the faithful life and heroic death of John Wordsworth, and three others were written to his memory. The lines "When to the Attractions of the Busy World" were probably composed shortly after John's long sojourn at Dove Cottage, from January, 1800, to September 29 of that year.

This beloved brother never came back to Grasmere after the farewell near Grisedale Tarn on that autumn day. His affairs prospered, and he was made captain of his ship, the *Abergavenny*. East Indiaman. On January 24, 1805, he wrote to William from Portsmouth, whence he expected to sail the next day if the wind continued fair. There were four hundred souls on board, half of them soldiers and paying passengers. Captain Wordsworth had invested all his own property in the cargo, and much borrowed money besides, including £1,200 belonging to Dorothy and William, one-third of what they had inherited from their father. Almost the last words of the captain's last letter are about his brother's poems. He was himself of a poetic nature, and his life was itself a true poem. Though less than a year younger than his sister, the simplicity and modesty of his character made him seem like a boy. He loved nature and solitude, and, whether on sea or land, kept in communion with the winds and stars. He loved poetry, too, and carried his brother's verses to sea with him. His life of danger and excitement was like a romance to the quiet inmates of Dove Cottage, and Dorothy spoke of him as their one hope.

The *Abergavenny* was lost on the night of February 5, 1805, off Weymouth, and her brave captain, calm to the last, perished with her. Neither William nor Dorothy ever recovered from this blow. They were henceforth no longer capable of a certain joyousness which used to carry them at times outside of themselves. It is a fatal property of imagination in serious and reflective persons that it makes its possessors suffer every ill in anticipation. No doubt the lonely watchers at Dove Cottage

had lived through many a night of imaginary shipwreck. Still, reality is never quite the same as a dream, and the shock of John's death, with the exchange of sympathy which followed, roused William to a salutary quickening of contact with his fellow-men. This he has acknowledged in his "Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont." If it had been *his* power to paint, he says, he would once have made a picture of "lasting ease, Elysian quiet without toil or strife."

> So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
> I have submitted to a new control:
> A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
> A deep distress hath humanized my soul.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> Farewell, farewell, the heart that lives alone,
> Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
> Such happiness, wherever it be known,
> Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.
>
> But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
> And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
> Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
> Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

This is one of the best examples of Wordsworth's "healing power." Less explicit, but yet very close, is the relation between his personal loss and the "Ode to Duty." When death looks even a healthy and innocent child in the face, joy withers. Yet joy, the poet held was the fountain-head of poetry. He had been saying this to himself as he composed the "Intimations" ode. It was the lesson he thought he had learned from his own experience, and of this lesson "The Prelude" was an elaborate utterance. What then? When joy departs, does life lose all savour? Does its grandeur, or even its interest, fade? Does it become unfit for poetic interpretation? To these questions the "Ode to Duty" is a confident reply. The whole poem corresponds morally to the tenth and eleventh stanzas of the "Intimations" ode, where the same fresh start is made, on

an impulse springing from a deeper principle than joy. In the "Intimations" the poet does not get beyond

> "the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering,"

unless, indeed, something more is implied in "faith that looks through death." But in the "Ode to Duty" acknowledgment is at last made by this proud man that obedience is a more important law of the universe than joy.

At first he was numb with grief, and his work was suspended. What brought back strength and courage was an effort to write about his brother. As late as May 1 he told Beaumont:

"Time was stealing away fast from me, and nothing done, and my mind still seeming unfit to do anything. At first I had a strong impulse to write a poem that should record my brother's virtues, and be worthy of his memory. I began to give vent to my feelings, with this view; but I was overpowered by my subject, and could not proceed. I composed much, but it is all lost except a few lines, as it came from me in such a torrent that I was unable to remember it. I could not hold the pen myself, and the subject was such that I could not employ Mrs. Wordsworth or my sister as my amanuensis. This work must therefore rest awhile till I am something calmer. I shall, however, never be at peace till, as far as in me lies, I have done justice to my departed brother's memory. His heroic death (the particulars of which I have now accurately collected from several of the survivors) exacts this from me, and still more his singularly interesting character and virtuous and innocent life."

It may be that both the "Ode to Duty" and the "Character of the Happy Warrior" resulted from this attempt. In the same letter Wordsworth states that, being unable to proceed with it, he resumed work on the poem of his own life, and had nearly completed it. Not self-conceit, he protests, but humility, prompted him, for he was diffident of his own powers, and wished to test them in a plain description of what he had felt

and seen. He admitted that he had been prolix, but this defect he had always, he said, found to be incurable whenever it occurred in any of his writings. He hoped Beaumont would say nothing to Coleridge about this redundancy, for he desired to have the latter's unbiassed opinion. At last, on June 3, 1805, he was able to announce to Sir George that he had finished the poem about a fortnight before. "I had," he says, "looked forward to the day as a most happy one; and I was indeed grateful to God for giving me life to complete the work, such as it is." But the day was not happy. He was not satisfied with the poem, the only long labour he had ever finished. He doubted whether he should live to complete "The Recluse," to which the present poem was to serve as a mere portico. But he intended to begin it soon, and when that was done, and a narrative poem of the epic kind, he should consider the task of his life as over. The chief cause of his depression, he stated, was the thought that he could not show the manuscript to his departed brother.

The whole force of Wordsworth's character lies behind all his letters except a few casual notes. They are marked by gravity, fulness of front, and a direct reference to first principles. Yet, while manly and frank, they are rarely unreserved. He opened his heart in his poems, and no doubt in his conversation with three or four persons, but seldom in those letters, at least, which have been preserved. We must remember that his correspondence with his sister and with Coleridge has been almost completely lost. There are, however, three of his letters to Beaumont and one to Southey on the subject of his brother John, in which he lays bare his feelings, and they take their place in this respect with the most intimate of his poems. In the very fire of his affliction, on the day when the news arrived, his thought turned at once to his sister and his friend: "I can say nothing higher of my ever-dear brother than that he was worthy of his sister who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge—meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a poet

in everything but words. . . . We have had no tidings of Coleridge. I tremble for the moment when he is to hear of my brother's death; it will distress him to the heart,—and his poor body cannot bear sorrow."

John was one of the remarkably large band who perceived the potency for good in the poet before he had yet proved his powers, and who dedicated to him their property or their services: Dorothy, Coleridge, Mrs. Wordsworth, Sara Hutchinson, Raisley Calvert, Sir George Beaumont. "As you will have seen," another of these letters says, "we had little to live upon and he as little (Lord Lonsdale being then alive). But he encouraged me to persist, and to keep my eye steady on its object. He would work for me (that was his language)—for me and his sister; and I was to endeavour to do something for the world." Two former ventures had failed; he had lost by them; the third was to have made them all secure. The obligation to do something for the world remained. "I shall never forget him, never lose sight of him. There is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living,—nay far more sacred,—calling upon me to do my utmost, as he to the last did his utmost, to live in honour and worthiness."

I judge that Wordsworth had steeled his heart not to lean too heavily upon the hope of immortality. His writings, both public and private, up to this time, are noticeably free from the language of theology. They would not suffice to show that their author held the Christian faith, and, indeed, their reticence might well support the contention that he was still an unbeliever. He rarely uses the name of God, and in the following extract, which contains the first hint of a return to faith, it is to be observed that he employs appellations to which the usage of the eighteenth century had given a deistical rather than an orthodox tinge—"the supreme Governor," "the great Cause and Ruler of things." The reflections are such as the intense realization of what we call "evil" or "pain" or "death" raises in every breast.

"A thousand times have I asked myself," he writes to Beaumont, "'why was he taken away?' and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact, there is no other answer which can satisfy and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice, and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the supreme Governor? Why should our notions of right towards each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be His notion and rule, if everything were to end here? Would it not be blasphemy to say that, upon the supposition of the thinking principle being destroyed by death, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things, we have more of love in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of another and a better world, I do not see."

Commonplaces? Yes, no doubt. But not with him. It makes all the difference who utters a commonplace. Wordsworth's inner life is a drama, whose value to the world is due to his perfect integrity and sincerity. Those reflections, from the pen of a lighter man, would carry little weight. Even from Coleridge they might seem too purely intellectual, or founded upon emotions too far developed from their source in instinct. The simplest and the most philosophic minds have ever formulated precisely these and no more convincing arguments for a future conscious life. They are indeed commonplaces. And it is of the utmost importance to know that Wordsworth, of all men, was forced to fall back upon them. In his letter to Southey, who was always urging his own brother, a naval officer, to perform some military exploit, such as capturing a prize, and whose language on the subject was often boyishly callous, Wordsworth sent a timely monition, and the passage proves that, in this time of sober vision, he saw for what they are worth the glory of this world and the glitter of arms:

"Oh! it makes the heart groan that, with such a beautiful world as this to live in, and such a soul as that of man's is by nature and gift of God, we should go about on such errands as we do, destroying and laying waste; and ninety-nine of us in a hundred never easy in any road that travels toward peace and quietness. And yet, what virtue and what goodness, what heroism and courage, what triumphs of disinterested love everywhere, and human life, after all, what it is! Surely, this is not to be for ever, even on this perishable planet!"

Throughout that sad spring, *ver tenebrosum* for the Wordsworths, Charles Lamb busied himself collecting information about the wreck, which disproved the newspaper insinuation that Captain Wordsworth had not tried to save his own life even when there was nothing else to save; and Mary Lamb and the good Mrs. Clarkson wrote letters of consolation to Dorothy. One voice was absent and greatly missed—that of Coleridge. As Mary Lamb wrote, in her touchingly simple poem:

> Why is he wandering on the sea?
> Coleridge should now with Wordsworth be.

He had, as we have seen, left England on April 9, 1804, and for some time news of him trickled home through the letters of Dr. Stoddart and his sister, who were friends of the Lambs. But for more than two years and four months he almost entirely failed to communicate with Mrs. Coleridge, Southey, Poole, the Wedgwoods, and the Wordsworths. War was in progress, the mail service was disorganized, and it is of course possible that his letters were intercepted. What is more certain, however, is that his indulgence in opiates, now that he was no longer protected by the tender watchfulness of those who loved him, increased fearfully and made him desperate. He is known to have left Malta September 21, 1805, and probably lived at Naples till the following January, when he went to Rome. Here the stayed till May 18. After that his movements are not definitely known until the date of his arrival off Portsmouth, August 11, 1806. He was very ill at the time of his return, and on one pretext and another postponed

going north until about November 1. In the meanwhile his failure to write or make definite plans, and the alarming accounts of his health, kept his friends on the rack. The Wordsworths had been expecting him daily for eighteen months. The suspense became agonizing when the death of their brother caused them to yearn for sympathy and the drawing together of old ties. "Coleridge's return . . . which surely will not be long," writes Dorothy in January, 1805, to Mrs. Clarkson. And in April she writes to her again: "We look forward to Coleridge's return with fear and painful hope, but indeed I dare not look to it. I think as little as I can of him. Oh, my dear friend, my heart seems to be shut against worldly hope!"

On Saturday, December 11, 1805, she writes to Mrs. Clarkson: "I have for many days been intending to send you a copy of a Poem which William has written for the Journal, suggested by that beautiful passage in Thomas Wilkinson's Tour about the solitary Highland Lass singing at her harvest work." She transcribes the poem, and relates what might have been a very serious mishap. The Third Part of her Journal of the Tour, and five books of William's poem, which had been sent to Mary, who was staying at Park House, were lost by the carrier. They had kept one copy, and Mary was to make a third. Fortunately, the parcel was found later in a field near Kirkstone Pass. The third copy was intended as a gift for Coleridge on his return. It still exists, in a beautiful handwriting—Sara Hutchinson's, probably. They were all much cheered by a letter from Mary Lamb, stating that her brother had heard from Stoddart, at Malta, that Coleridge had reached Trieste on his way home. Dorothy, however, is apprehensive lest the French may capture him. William thinks he will most likely "wheel round and pass through some parts of Hungary and Prussia. It will be a terribly long journey in this cold season, and it is impossible not to have fears for his health, but it is astonishing what he can bear when his mind is at work with his body." Nevertheless, she is extremely anxious.

In October Wordsworth writes to Beaumont: "I am sorry to say I am not yet settled to any serious employment. The expectation of Coleridge not a little unhinges me." He betakes himself in this unsettled state to translating Ariosto and Michael Angelo's sonnets. His comment on the sonnets is so finely expressed, in a letter to Beaumont, that I cannot forbear quoting it here:

"I mentioned Michael Angelo's poetry some time ago; it is the most difficult to construe I ever met with, but just what you would expect from such a man, showing abundantly how conversant his soul was with great things. There is a mistake in the world concerning the Italian language; the poetry of Dante and Michael Angelo proves that, if there be little majesty and strength in Italian verse, the fault is in the authors, and not in the tongue. I can translate, and have translated, two books of Ariosto at the rate, nearly, of 100 lines a day; but so much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning sometimes so excellent in itself, that I found the difficulty of translating him insurmountable. I attempted, at least, fifteen of the sonnets, but could not anywhere succeed. I have sent you the only one I was able to finish; it is far from being the best or most characteristic, but the others were too much for me."

The only text of Michael Angelo then available was the dressed-up text published by his great-nephew, Michael Angelo the younger, in 1623. It was not till 1863 that the poems were faithfully edited by Cesare Guasti. Wordsworth would have found the true originals even more difficult to translate than the text he used.

As late as February, 1806, they were still uncertain whether Coleridge was well or ill, alive or dead. On the 11th of that month Wordsworth writes to Beaumont: "We have lately had much anxiety about Coleridge. What can have become of him? It must be upwards of three months since he landed at Trieste. Has he returned to Malta, think you, or what can have befallen him? He has never since been heard of." It is the same story in letter after letter. We need him to ease the heartache; we need him to kindle our minds;

we need him in Grasmere, and is he in Trieste? Travels Waring east away?

On August 1, 1806, Wordsworth writes to Beaumont: "I do not know whether my sister has written since we had another account of Coleridge,—I am sorry I cannot say *from* him. He was at Leghorn, with a friend, on their way to England; so that we will still continue to look for him daily." He goes on to say that Coleridge has lost all his papers, including the poems copied for him by Mrs. Wordsworth and Dorothy and five books of "The Prelude." He longs for a conversation with him on the subject of "The Recluse," which is now being rapidly composed.

I have made merely a selection from the references to Coleridge in the correspondence of 1804-1806. Even these few show how the man was loved, and that his friends depended on him as much as he, the most dependent of men, upon them. If the letters that passed directly between him and them had been preserved, what tale of ancient or modern love would surpass this romance of friendship? Even these little outcries of anxiety and pain show the intensity of Wordsworth's affections. It is easy now to understand why he aged so rapidly during Coleridge's absence. He looked old before his time. All his portraits, after the Alfoxden period, make him appear much older than he was when they were taken. He knew and feared his extreme sensibility, but the more austerely he denied it outward expression, the more it wasted him inwardly.

When news of the wanderer's return reached the Lambs in August, it spread like the word of Drake's home-coming in the *Golden Hind*. And then came his strange conduct in delaying to go north, and reports of his changed looks and miserable spirits. Again and again he broke his engagements. Finally, what the Wordsworths had long known became apparent to the whole friendly circle: he could no longer endure the thought of living with his wife. Wordsworth, whose family had grown too large for Dove Cottage, was ready to go anywhere so as to be near him. Plans of this

kind were made and unmade all through the autumn. Owing to Sir George's generous proposals, it was necessary to explain matters to him, and at last Wordsworth and his sister broke their long silence.

"What shall I say of Coleridge? or what can I say?" Wordsworth writes to Beaumont. "My dear friend, this is certain, that he is destined to be unhappy. I would not distress you and Lady Beaumont with this, but it is not to be kept from you, and ought not, loving him and us as you do. I believe I have spoken to Lady Beaumont of his domestic situation, so that the little which I shall now say will not be altogether new, and therefore will, I hope, be less felt. In fact, he dare not go home, he recoils so much from the thought of domesticating with Mrs. Coleridge, with whom, though on many accounts he much respects her, he is so miserable that he dare not encounter it. What a deplorable thing! I have written to him to say that if he does not come down immediately I must insist upon seeing him somewhere. If he appoints London, I shall go. I believe, if anything good is to be done for him, it must be done by me."

Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont some time in the autumn as follows: "My dear Friend, you will judge how much we have suffered from anxiety and distress within the last few weeks. We have long known how unfit Coleridge and his wife were for each other. . . . Poor soul! he had a struggle of many years striving to bring Mrs. Coleridge to a change of temper, and something like communion with him in his enjoyments. . . . I hope everything from the effect of my brother's conversation upon Coleridge's mind."

Her brother, however, was prevented from going to London by the fact that, when Coleridge at last brought himself to write, it was to say that he was coming north. But as the Wordsworths had undertaken to remove from Dove Cottage to Sir George's estate, Coleorton, and it was found that Coleridge had promised to give a course of lectures in London, they were in a quandary. When they had reached Kendal, on their way to Coleorton, which is in Leicestershire, they learned that Coleridge was at Pen-

rith, hovering about Keswick, but not venturing to go there; so they waited in Kendal at great inconvenience, sending off a special messenger to request him to join them there. Sara Hutchinson was in communication with him, and in some way they managed to drive and entice him to Kendal. From Dorothy Wordsworth's letter of November 6 to Mrs. Clarkson, describing the painful scenes which ensued, I infer that he was in a kind of delirium. He arrived at an inn about seven in the evening, and sent for Wordsworth. We must remember that the friends had not met for over two years and eight months. Dorothy says:

"We all [*i.e.*, W. W., D. W., M. H., and S. H.] went thither to him, and never, never did I feel such a shock as at first sight of him. We all felt exactly in the same way—as if he were different from what we had expected to see; almost as much as a person of whom we had thought much, and of whom we had formed an image in our own minds, without having any personal knowledge of him. . . . We—that is, Mary and I—stayed with him from Sunday evening till Tuesday morning at nine o'clock; but Sara Hutchinson and William did not part from him till the morning following. Alas! what can I say? I know not what to hope for, or what to expect. My wishes are plain and fair, that he may have strength of mind to abide by his resolution of separating from Mrs. C., and hereafter may continue unshaken."

He appeared to her utterly changed. He would not talk about himself or them or their common friends. "The divine expression of his countenance," to use her own phrase, was lost. "Alas! I never saw it as it used to be—a shadow, a gleam there was at times, but how faint and transitory." She was sure he was ill, and that he must sink if he did not grow more happy. "I think, however," she adds, "that, if he have courage to go through the work before him, William's conversation and our kind offices may soothe him and bring on tranquillity; and then the only hope that remains will be in his applying himself to some grand object connected with permanent effects." These last ten words were doubtless caught from her brother's lips. How

like him they sound! and how well he knew the character of his friend! For, be it observed, not even at this trying crisis did those who truly understood Coleridge think of him as a man of petty or selfish aims. With all his failings, they honoured him as a man, or more than man, dedicated to high and impersonal objects. I have seen nothing to indicate that Dorothy *knew* he was addicted to the opium habit, though it is hard to believe she could have remained ignorant. Naturally, the domestic difficulty seemed to her sufficient to account for everything. In a letter to Lady Beaumont, postmarked December 10, 1806, she says they have had four letters from Coleridge, and "in all he speaks with the same steadiness of his resolution to separate from Mrs. Coleridge, and she has fully agreed to it, and consented that he should take Hartley and Derwent and superintend their education, she being allowed to have them at the holidays." But poor Mrs. Coleridge kept changing her mind.

Coleridge attributed her reluctance to a "mere selfish desire to have a *rank* in life, and not to be believed to be that which she really was," and to a fear of what people would say. It is impossible not to sympathize with the neglected wife, though the judgment of the fair-minded Dorothy Wordsworth 's plainly against her. The separation was not publicly or officially made, but on December 21 Coleridge, with his eldest boy, joined the Wordsworths at Coleorton, and he remained with them about two months. He had made shipwreck of his life, but managed to steer into a friendly haven, with much precious cargo, and refit. It was at Coleorton, in January, 1807, that Wordsworth read to him the poem on his own life; and here, too, lifted from despair by this noble tribute to himself, and with a heart renewed by this appeal to his better nature, Coleridge wrote his pathetic response, "To William Wordsworth, composed for the greater part on the same night after the finishing of his recitation of the Poem in Thirteen Books, on the Growth of his own Mind."

To account for Wordsworth's being at Coleorton, we

shall have to go back about two years, and consider the course of his friendship with Sir George and Lady Beaumont. His letters to them are generally very long, and not always of much biographical interest. He seems to have mastered fairly well, in the case of the Beaumonts, that nervousness which afflicted him when writing to Poole or Lamb or De Quincey. Epistles they truly are, of a kind that had already gone out of fashion. Three subjects in particular are treated in them, again and again—architecture, landscape-gardening, and the philosophy of all the arts.

Sir George was building on a large scale at Coleorton, and sought Wordsworth's advice as a professional student of the relation between natural beauty and the works of man. Starting from a principle formulated by Coleridge, though probably conceived by himself, Wordsworth insisted that it should not be attempted, as in the case of many large estates, to make the surrounding country conform to the style of a mansion, but that the house should harmonize with the country. "Indeed," said the wise counsellor, in words which modern building has fully justified, "in the present state of society, I see nothing interesting either to the imagination or the heart, and, of course, nothing which true taste can approve, in any interference with Nature, grounded upon any other principle." Would that all builders, in the century of ostentatious extravagance which has intervened between that day and ours, had obeyed this canon of taste! With Wordsworth the building of a house was a sacred rite. He held a sublime theory, based on reverence for nature, on close observance of her laws, and on a due regard for man's place in the universe. "If I were disposed," he says, in the letter just quoted, "to write a sermon upon the subject of taste in natural beauty . . . all that I had to say would begin and end in the human heart, as under the direction of the Divine Nature, conferring value on the objects of the senses and pointing out what is valuable in them." This remark borne constantly in mind while reading his poetry will help us to understand many

a passage whose significance might otherwise escape us. "No liberal art," he says in another letter, "aims merely at the gratification of an individual or a class: the painter or poet is degraded in proportion as he does so; the true servant of the Arts pays homage to the human kind as impersonated in unwarped and enlightened minds."

In October, 1806, Sir George lent Wordsworth a farmhouse on his Coleorton estate, and there the family, with Sara Hutchinson, and for awhile with Coleridge and his son Hartley, lived until the following August. In the absence of the proprietor, Wordsworth supervised the laying out of the grounds. He had studied the life of trees. He knew the manner of their growth, and could foresee how a plantation would look after many years. To the groves and lawns, the hedges and fences, the cottages and outbuildings, of Coleorton, he gave many weeks of careful and methodical planning. I should suppose that every landscape-gardener would profit by reading his letters to the Beaumonts, which are full of professional detail. It is true that in them the dogmatic tone which rings through all his later prose begins to appear prominently, but he is discoursing on a subject of which he has gained mastery. People who met him casually in later life, or heard him talk once or twice, pronounced him opinionated. This was never the judgment of those who knew him well, for they realized that what he said was part of a reasoned system.

During the years 1805-1807, while Coleridge was absent, the Clarksons were good neighbours and constant correspondents, and intercourse was maintained with Charles and Mary Lamb. Poole, for a time, seems to have been neglected, not only by Coleridge, from whom he received no word for three years, but by Wordsworth. Southey never had been an intimate friend, and the fact that he was now living at Keswick, did not bring him much closer. Wordsworth found him insipid. In July, 1804, the Wordsworths had a day and a half of Humphry Davy's company, as he passed through

Grasmere on his way to Edinburgh. He was at Grasmere again in the autumn of 1805, together with Walter Scott and Mrs. Scott. The following passage from Lockhart's "Life of Scott" records the occasion:

"About this time Mr. and Mrs. Scott made a short excursion to the Lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland, and visited some of their finest scenery, in company with Mr. Wordsworth. I have found no written narrative of this little tour, but I have often heard Scott speak with enthusiastic delight of the reception he met with in the humble cottage which his brother poet then inhabited on the banks of Grasmere; and at least one of the days they spent together was destined to furnish a theme for the verse of each, namely, that which they gave to the ascent of Helvellyn, where, in the course of the preceding spring, a young gentleman having lost his way and perished by falling over a precipice, his remains were discovered, three months afterwards, still watched by 'a faithful terrier-bitch, his constant attendant during frequent rambles among the wilds.' This day they were accompanied by an illustrious philosopher, who was also a true poet—and might have been one of the greatest of poets had he chosen; and I have heard Mr. Wordsworth say that it would be difficult to express the feeling with which he, who so often had climbed Helvellyn alone, found himself standing on its summit with two such men as Scott and Davy."

Wordsworth's poem is called "Fidelity," and Scott's "Helvellyn." In "Musings near Aquapendente," written in 1837, Wordsworth recalled that hour on

> old Helvellyn's brow
> Where once together, in his day of strength,
> We stood rejoicing, as if earth were free
> From sorrow, like the sky above our heads,

and his memory of the occasion was so vivid that he could tell Miss Fenwick in 1843:

"Sir Humphry Davy was with us at the time. We had ascended from Patterdale, and I could not but admire the vigour with which Scott scrambled along that horn of the mountain called Striding Edge. Our progress was necessarily slow, and was beguiled by

Scott's telling many stories and amusing anecdotes, as was his custom. Sir H. Davy would have probably been better pleased if other topics had occasionally been interspersed, and some discussion entered upon. At all events, he did not remain with us long at the top of the mountain, but left us to find our way down its steep side together into the Vale of Grasmere, where, at my cottage, Mrs. Scott was to meet us at dinner."

Not long afterwards, on November 7, 1805, Wordsworth on foot, and his sister riding a pony, with a wallet containing their bundle of "needments" climbed over Kirkstone Pass to Patterdale, and wandered for a week along the shores of Ullswater. Her account of this outing has been printed in her Journal. It served as the basis for Wordsworth's sketch, "Excursion on the Banks of Ullswater," which he published in his "Guide through the District of the Lakes" in 1835. A comparison of the two records helps one to understand the intellectual relationship of the brother and sister. As it was raining when they reached Patterdale, Wordsworth employed his surplus energy—most men after such a walk would have had none to spare—in writing to Scott. The latter was then preparing his edition of Dryden, and had asked for advice. Wordsworth expresses his satisfaction with Scott's undertaking, and gives in one page of inestimable value his opinion of Dryden's genius. I do not know anywhere in our language an equally brief piece of criticism which is so complete and so just. It is as follows:

"I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden: not that he is, as a poet, any great favourite of mine; I admire his talents and genius highly, but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *that* he certainly has, and of such language, too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or, rather, that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the

intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden: but as little, I think, as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of Palamon and Arcite, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men, or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination must have necessarily followed from this,—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation from Virgil, wherever Virgil can be fairly said to have his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage."

While they were still wandering amid scenes of peace and happiness, news reached them, on November 10, of the death of Lord Nelson and of the victory at Trafalgar. "Sequestered as we were," writes Wordsworth, "from the sympathy of a crowd, we were shocked to hear that the bells had been ringing joyously at Penrith to celebrate the triumph."

It was while upon this excursion that Wordsworth opened negotiations for the purchase of a property on the shores of Ullswater. Dove Cottage was overcrowded, and he had found a beautiful spot near Patterdale, well suited to his needs. He thought it worth £700, and offered £800, which was refused. Hearing of this, his Quaker friend Wilkinson mentioned the matter to Lord Lowther, who, without consulting Wordsworth, whom he had never met, bought the property for £1,000, and presented it to the poet. Wordsworth, embarrassed by this generosity, insisted on returning to Lord Lowther that part of this sum which he has been prepared to pay in the first place, and accepted only the remaining £200. But his project of enlarging the small cottage he had thus obtained, and removing to it, never came to a head, owing principally to Sir George Beaumont's invitation to Coleorton and his own desire to accommodate his plans to those of Coleridge.

There occurred in 1806 a short renewal of intercourse with the Rev. Francis Wrangham, now very wealthy and eminent in the fashionable and the literary worlds. This old friend seems to have suggested that they should publish the satirical verse upon which they had co-operated ten years before. We have Wordsworth's reply. He says he had determined to steer clear of personal satire. He would be slow to meddle even with public offenders. He declines, therefore, to lend any assistance to the proposed publication, and asks to have his old satirical verses destroyed. He is afraid that if they were published without his name the authorship would leak out, and he does not wish that to happen.

William Hazlitt renewed his acquaintance, as we learn in a letter from Southey dated December 14, 1803, in which he says: "Hazlitt, whom you saw at Paris, has been here; a man of real genius. He has made a very fine picture of Coleridge for Sir George Beaumont, which is said to be in Titian's manner; he has also painted Wordsworth, but so dismally, though Wordsworth's face is his idea of physiognomical perfection, that one of his friends, on seeing it, exclaimed, 'At the gallows—deeply affected by his deserved fate—yet determined to die like a man'; and if you saw the picture you would admire the criticism."

Southey cannot be accused of excessive reverence for his great contemporaries. He judged them with jaunty self-assurance, habitually assuming that some quality or other of his own set him in a superior position. The overwhelming respectability of his character, his prudence, learning, industry, and kindness, were insufficient to draw Wordsworth to him; hence there is very little record of intimacy between them in the years we are considering. He had, with reference to ideas, movements, and general principles, a fatal inability to see things as they really were, uncoloured by the sentiments which, for the time being, predominated in his own mind. He was therefore an uncommonly bad prophet, though he was for ever prophesying. It is to his credit as a

critic, however, that so early as 1804 he made the following prediction about Wordsworth, if he really meant half of what he said: "Wordsworth will do better [than Coleridge], and leave behind him a name, unique in its way; he will rank among the very first poets, and probably possesses a mass of merits superior to all, except only Shakespeare. This is doing much, yet he would be a happier man if he did more."

The following letter from Dorothy to Mrs. Marshall accounts for the doings of the Wordsworth family in the spring of 1806:

"GRASMERE,
"*Monday, June 2nd.*

"Sara Hutchinson is with us. . . . My brother has been in London for two months; he returned on Monday week in great spirits and much improved in his health, and very glad to be in quiet at home again, though he enjoyed himself highly in the gay world, being resolved to see all that it was possible in the time. I wish he had come home by Leeds [where Mrs. Marshall lived] instead of Manchester. [He came to be in time for Mrs. Wordsworth's third confinement.] . . . He brought us very pleasing accounts of my uncle Cookson's family, all of whom he saw but one, and of my brother Christopher and his wife and child. They live very nicely in a nice house at Lambeth.* As for us, we shall at last be driven out of our cottage, for we do not think we ought to live here another winter, and with a third child it is so very unwholesome for a large family, the rooms being so small and low."

The poet's second son, Thomas, was born June 16, 1806.

* Christopher Wordsworth was Rector of Lambeth. He was soon to become Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, in which office he seemed "pompous and priggish" to Edward Fitzgerald in his undergraduate days (see Fitzgerald's "Letters," p. 381). He was a voluminous writer of theological books, and an important personage in the ecclesiastical world.

CHAPTER XIX

NEW SONG

Let us reserve five great poems completed between 1803 and 1807—the ode on "Intimations of Immortality," the "Ode to Duty," the "Character of the Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," and the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle"—and consider now the others written in that period. They number about fifty, and, although in many cases the date of their composition is not known, they were nearly all published in the two volumes of 1807. Almost every piece in this collection is of high quality, and, furthermore, we have here a remarkable range of thought and variety of craftsmanship. Had these volumes been printed anonymously, critics might well have been excused for regarding them as the work of several authors. In "The Horn of Egremont Castle" we have a tale of chivalry such as Scott might have attempted in one of his literary raids across the border. In "Stray Pleasures," "The Power of Music," and "Star-gazers," we have three light, colloquial pieces, loose of structure, in experimental verse forms, yet each leading to a moral, "not of this noisy world, but silent and divine." The memories upon which they were founded reached back to an earlier time, 1791 or 1793, when the poet, as he tells us in "The Prelude," was making it his serious business to catch at incidents of street life that might serve to connect its turbulence and change with what is permanent in nature. It is interesting to observe that in almost all the passages or whole poems in which Wordsworth describes the town he indulges in a free, rapid, and comparatively careless manner, in marked contrast to the compact and scrupulous style of his descriptions of natural objects.

Of the latter and more characteristic kind we have many examples among the poems written between his tour in Scotland and the spring of 1807—examples of nature's power to soothe, to satisfy, to elevate the heart. They are of a less agitated strain than the "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," less abounding in obstinate questionings, less audacious in the claims they make for the human spirit. We find in them, not the wild joy of communion with elemental force, but a restful willingness to accept what nature may deign to bestow. The madness and gladness of discovery have given way to steady happiness founded on a humble and well-tested faith. Perhaps the best instance of what I mean is the little poem "Yes, it was the Mountain Echo," with its admonition to listen, ponder, and hold dear, the voices that come we know not whence. The perfect sonnet "To Sleep"—"A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by"—shows the conquest he has achieved over his unquiet soul, and how nature no longer haunts him like a passion, but has become a "Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health." We think sadly of poor Coleridge and his awful lines on "The Pains of Sleep." The thought forces itself upon us, too, that Wordsworth's gains as a man were imperilling his genius as a poet. There is a more authentic *aura* of inspiration, a diviner, even if a thinner air, in "Tintern Abbey," "Resolution and Independence," "At the Grave of Burns," in Shelley's "Alastor" and "Ode to the West Wind," in Coleridge's "Dejection," in Leopardi's "La Ginestra," in "Les Nuits" of Musset, than in any song of "homefelt delight" and "sober certainty of waking bliss." It is one of Wordsworth's royal distinctions that, like Shakespeare and Goethe, the poet in him survived the attainment of happiness; that he, like them, passed from melodious agony to serene harmonies. But that the gain for art, for philosophy, for personal completeness is won at the expense of poetry, in the purest and most absolute sense of the word, there can be no question.

Joy, Wordsworth once thought, is the motive and background of poetry. But joy is an intense, mysterious, elemental passion, and its closest fellow is not tranquillity, but pain. And pain inspired the most poignant note in these short poems printed for the first time in 1807, the lines entitled "A Complaint," and beginning "There is a change—and I am poor."

Acting on the theory that personal references tended to diminish the permanent value of poetry, Wordsworth excluded some pieces from his published works and modified others, substituting, for example, fanciful for real names, as "Emmeline" for "Dorothy." Fortunately, he more often violated this law. Yet he has left us many a mystery. In the present instance, we can only guess that the friend whose coolness is the subject of "A Complaint" was Coleridge.

The four sonnets long afterwards entitled "Personal Talk" show Wordsworth in an unusually familiar attitude. They express a mood and reveal some of his tastes. Later in life, to judge from conversations reported by lionizing visitors, he yielded only too often to the impulse of which we have here a first glimpse, and talked very complacently about himself, his likes and dislikes. In early manhood he was extremely reticent on such subjects, and his conversation was remarkably impersonal. With Coleridge he could spend whole days and nights in discourse on great themes.

Of pure tuneful lyric melody there is rich abundance in these poems. Perhaps the most exquisite example is

> O Nightingale! thou surely art
> A Creature of a fiery heart

—verses that begin with a wild cry of delight, in the boldest Elizabethan strain, and end with a gravely happy and strictly modulated passage:

> He sang of love with quiet blending,
> Slow to begin, and never ending;
> Of serious faith, and inward glee;
> That was the Song, the Song for me!

For ages, poets had heard the melancholy of the nightingale's varied voice; it had spoken to them of

unforgotten wrong and sorrow; rarely had they—Milton was one of the exceptions—broken through the bonds of tradition and caught its tone of oblivious ecstasy. Musically, the transition from the stanza in which the nightingale warbles its allegro, to the one in which the stockdove gently measures out its "homely tale," is marvellous. To students of Wordsworth's life, the thought must come that he had now, whether through renunciation or through a withdrawal of the gift of the gods, ceased to vibrate habitually to the "tumultuous harmony and fierce" that echoes not seldom in his early songs. The Wordsworth of later years is all in the second stanza. If our experiences and sympathies are so much more limited than his that we can enjoy only the poetry of adventurous youth, his life and his art henceforth will not appeal to us. In that case, he might have died at the age when Shelley ceased, and we should be no losers. But far otherwise is it for us if we have the breadth and patience and wisdom to go with him into the second half of his existence, appreciating the value of completeness and integrity.

It has often been said, with an obvious degree of truth, but also with undiscriminating exaggeration, that Wordsworth was deficient in humour. No doubt he lacked the briskness for a quick return upon himself, the sceptical faculty, the sense of human littleness, by which most men protect themselves from being overwhelmed by the importance of nature, their fellows, and themselves. He was generally either too happy or too sad for humour, too deeply interested in what seemed to him the significant aspects of things. And it is true he was never humble. But we need not confound humility with humour. Admitting, as I suppose we must, some defect—and it is only too apparent if we think of him in connection with Scott and Coleridge, not to mention Lamb—fairness requires that three reasons why the world considers him devoid of humour should be utterly rejected. The first is that fashionable society and the subservient critics who voiced the cruel and absurd views of fashion were by *parti pris*, by

vanity, and the instinct of self-preservation, determined to regard as unworthy of notice the simple people, scenes, and incidents, that Wordsworth made the subjects of his verse. If a poet chose Alice Fell as a heroine instead of some Angelica or Rosamond, he must, they declared, be a man without humour. And, secondly, Wordsworth did not "pose" well. He was not at ease among strangers. When he became celebrated, and visitors, often very solemn persons, or so frivolous they made him solemn, went on a pilgrimage to hear him talk, he injudiciously yielded to their desire, and discoursed, with a royal freedom and royal pride, about himself. He was too honest to pretend to think otherwise than as he really thought. He would not descend to Cæsar's artifice, who, after all, only tries to heighten his majesty by suppressing the first-person pronoun, or to Goethe's, who gave his worshippers the impression of being more interested in their affairs than in his own. The third injustice is one he himself did to himself, and yet at an age when he may well be pardoned, for he was no longer himself. When he dictated to Miss Fenwick, in 1843, those rambling, solemn, inexact, and often senile notes on his poems, he had already come within the shadow of death. But down to the point at which we have arrived, down to middle life, Wordsworth often shows a playful vein. We see it in his letters to Wrangham and in many short pieces of verse. "Peter Bell" was grossly misunderstood because it is a medley of deep seriousness and mild humour.

And another long poem, composed in 1805, read from manuscript to Charles Lamb shortly afterwards, dedicated to that discriminating humorist in 1819, and appreciated by him, was conceived and executed throughout in a spirit of broad and genial playfulness. It was appropriately classified by its author as a poem of the fancy, though here and there it contains flashes of awe-struck imagination. The metre is fitted to the mood, octosyllabic couplets, alternating freely between iambics and trochees, and with there and here a feminine ending, a short line, or an irregular rhyme. It is a moving

picture of the old highway between Ambleside and Keswick as seen by night and in a thunderstorm, when familiar objects are transformed and vague unrealities excite without subduing the mind. According to Wordsworth's noble and original theory, imagination deals with truth, with the permanent; fancy, with fleeting aspects of things and light impressions of the observer. "The Waggoner" is a typical application of this latter faculty. It falls into a class with many famous examples, such as the "Epistles" of Horace, nine-tenths of "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan," and a considerable portion of Cowper's "Task," though I do not mean to assert that it equals any of these in sportive grace. It is valuable as showing Wordsworth completely at his ease, and serves also as an extreme boundary on one side of the vast field over which his genius extends.

There remains an important group of short poems written between 1803 and 1807 to which we have not adverted, poems expressing love of country and of liberty. At this period of his life, as heretofore, Wordsworth's religion was drawn from two sources—external nature, and the principles he deduced from human character. The latter may be summed up as a belief that liberty is a primary right of man, and essential to his welfare. He had not abated one jot of his social faith, though by this time convinced that France had thrown away her chance of leadership. As he looked over the world, it appeared to him that Britain was, after all, the strongest champion of liberty. Having accepted this conclusion in general, he straightway acted upon it, as we have seen in the case of the sonnets of 1802. The particular crisis brought about by Napoleon's threat of invasion made an opportunity not to be neglected without guilt, even though doubts and scruples may often have raised their heads. To a man so deeply affected by beauty, there must have been unspeakable joy in feeling free at last to celebrate, with a clear conscience, the incomparable beauty which is associated, in England, with practices of which Wordsworth had previously

disapproved. An unbeliever is pitifully torn between conflicting principles and tastes when standing in some lovely English cathedral close. His reason disapproves of the institution; his memory dwells on historical incongruities; he wonders how, in the future, these edifices are ever to be related to the needs of men; on the other hand, his eye revels in the noble forms which he beholds, and his imagination would fain persuade him of their sacredness.

Wordsworth had now made up his mind what the general line of his conduct should be. But traces of the inner conflict had not all disappeared. Charles James Fox died September 13, 1806, and from Wordsworth's poem, "Loud is the Vale! the Voice is up," in which he deplored the hourly expected dissolution of this liberal statesman and friend of the Revolution, calling him by implication "great and good," and a man "from God sent forth," we must infer that Fox's political principles were still not altogether contrary to his own. Yet only two months later, having heard of the battle of Jena and the triumphant progress of French arms in North Germany, whence Napoleon threatened to blockade England, he calls on his countrymen to be "wise, upright, valiant," since they are "the last that dare to struggle with the Foe." What is perhaps the grandest of his political sonnets followed a little later—"Two Voices are there; one is of the sea." Liberty is his theme again in the deep-felt sonnet, "To Thomas Clarkson, on the final passage of the bill for the abolition of the slave-trade, March, 1807," and here, certainly, he saw no divided duty. It is interesting that Dorothy Wordsworth, who was intimate with Wilberforce in her girlhood, was now the neighbour and dear friend of the Clarksons.

Wordsworth cultivated the sonnet more frequently in his boyhood and youth than one would be able to conjecture from his published works alone. In her letters from Forncett to Jane Pollard, Dorothy, it will be remembered, mentions her brother's sonnets. One of his earliest poems among those subsequently published

was a sonnet, "Calm is all nature as a resting wheel." His study of Italian with Agostino Isola, his veneration for Milton, and his hard practice in translating Michael Angelo, gave him complete mastery of the form. The sonnet was to be henceforth the favourite vehicle of his opinions, as distinguished on the one hand from the records of his direct observation of nature, and on the other from the larger outlines of his philosophy. These sonnets covered an extremely wide range—wider, I venture to say, than those of any other English poet in any age. If there be a contrary impression, it is due to the consistent personality which shows itself in them all, and not to a lack of variety in their subjects. Being vehicles of opinion, they are often passionately dogmatic. Some, however, and these among the very best, are free utterances of happy moods, made with no design except to receive and give pleasure. Even in these, however, the poet is still a teacher, though of general rather than systematic truths. Several sonnets of this kind were written, apparently, in 1806, as, for example, "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room," "The world is too much with us," "A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by," and the two splendid sea-pictures—"Where lies the land to which yon ship must go?" and "With ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh."

One of the last rewards of an intimate study of Wordsworth's works is that one comes to realize their architectonic unity. This is most impressive. One learns to look for character and principle even in the slightest particular. There are no strokes of mere caprice. This great body of prose and verse is informed with one spirit. The whole is an organic union. The productions of one year prepare the reader insensibly for those of the next. So firm was Wordsworth's intellectual constitution that even the most seductive or overwhelming personal influences, while they often affected him deeply, began only after a considerable period to bear visible results. And when we take for granted that he has developed one great theme to the fullest extent possible for him, we find it recurring, transformed

and broadened, but still the same. This is nowhere better shown than in the five major poems which were completed between 1805 and 1807—namely, the "Ode to Duty," "Character of the Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," and the ode on "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." In the first two of these he appears to give up or greatly modify the "genial faith, still rich in genial good," which guided his younger days—faith in joy as the principle of a rich and useful life.* In the "Ode to Duty," the poet cannot forget, and is unwilling to condemn, the innocent souls who by their birthright, their divine heritage of essential goodness, live "without reproach or blot." The disciple of Rousseau and Godwin, still in revolt against the doctrine of innate depravity, even while recognizing that some natures fall, and need thenceforth the disciple of conscience, reserves a limbo of the innocents. I like to think he had in mind his sister. That he was conscious of his boldness in thus setting up his private faith against the creeds of Christendom is evident from a comparison of the poem as printed, with the copy of the second and third stanzas published by W. Hale White from an original manuscript in the possession of T. Norton Longman. These cancelled stanzas are more outspoken than the form that was finally adopted. They read:

> There are who tread a blameless way
> In purity, and love, and truth,
> Though resting on no better stay
> Than on the genial sense of youth:
> Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot;
> Who do the right and know it not:
> May joy be theirs while life shall last
> And may a genial sense remain when Youth is past.

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* Ernest Hartley Coleridge, in a delightful article on "The Lake Poets in Somersetshire," published in Vol. XX. of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, says that his grandfather had a short name for the indispensable condition of creative genius: "He called it joy, meaning thereby not mirth or high spirits, or even happiness, but a consciousness of entire and therefore well being, when the emotional and intellectual faculties are in equipoise."

Serene would be our days and bright;
And happy would our nature be;
If Love were an unerring light;
And Joy its own security.
And bless'd are they who in the main
This creed, even now, do entertain,
Do in this spirit live; yet know
That Man hath other hopes; strength which
elsewhere must grow.

These variances of text show that the poet was not merely groping towards a more finished expression of his thought, but hesitating between an extreme ethical idea and a more guarded one. The opening of yet another rejected stanza indicates that he made a distinction between conscience, as an inborn voice, and a sense of duty, as the result of experience:

O Power of *Duty*! sent from God
To enforce on earth his high behest,
And keep us faithful to the road
Which Conscience hath pronounc'd the best.

There is a possible connection between the "Ode to Duty" and a passage on "the Beautiful Soul" in Schiller's "Anmuth und Würde." It was a favourite idea with some of the German Romanticists that certain souls, through natural innocence, were secure from temptation, and needed not for their guidance the precepts of moral law. Theirs it was to bask in the sunlight of divine favour. Goodness in them was instinctive. So far as I can perceive, there was no firmer basis for this view than pure sentimentality. For the theological dogma of sanctification there was a doctrinal basis and more or less support in experience; Schiller's notion had, I suppose, only the warrant of congruity with the trend of contemporary feeling. It was, indeed, very characteristic of that strange, foolish revolt against law which was one of the main currents of Romanticism. German novels and poetry were full of *schöne Seelen*. So were the romances of Chateaubriand. In behalf of these "characters" without character, the rules of the game of life were supposed to

be relaxed. They could sin without blame or moral danger. That was the outcome,—the invention of an impossible type in fiction.

The passage in Schiller's essay may be loosely rendered as follows:

"In a beautiful soul the moral feeling in all the emotions has at length grown so secure that it can fearlessly leave to impulse the guidance of the will, without fear of contradiction from the latter. Therefore, in a beautiful soul, particular acts are not properly moral, but the whole character is. No particular acts, moreover, can be accounted praiseworthy, because the satisfaction of impulse can never be a subject of praise. The beautiful soul has no other merit than that she exists. With ease, as if mere instinct were at work through her, she performs the most painful human duties; and the most heroic sacrifice which she extracts from natural impulse strikes us as a voluntary effect of this very impulse. Hence she herself never perceives the beauty of her own conduct, and it never occurs to her that there could be other acts and other feelings; whereas a well-drilled pupil in the school of moral rules, obedient to his master's command, will be ever ready to give the strictest account of the relationship of his actions to the law."

In an unpublished letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs. Clarkson there is an indication that she, too, had caught up this idea of a *schöne Seele*, who does what is right without effort. Speaking of Mrs. Rawson, of Halifax, she says: "Mrs. R., the very best-tempered woman and the most thoroughly intent upon doing what is right of any person I ever knew, and all without effort from a blessed nature." The date—July, 1807—is significant.

The "Character of the Happy Warrior" was probably written either very late in 1805 or early in 1806, when the sad undercurrent of Wordsworth's thought, flowing from his brother's death, was brightening with pride in his noble life and final constancy. There is a note appended to the poem in the edition of 1807, stating that the death of Lord Nelson "directed the Author's thoughts to the subject"; it is supported by a long

Fenwick note to the same effect, and by a letter from Southey to Scott, dated February 4, 1806. In several places, however, and for one in a letter to Beaumont, written February 11, 1806, enclosing a copy of the poem, Wordsworth speaks of Nelson in very qualified terms. There is much in the poem which is manifestly not applicable to him. It is by no means a eulogy on the military life. It is a portrait of a hero, in peace or in war. If a soldier is placable and compassionate, his gentleness is the more to be commended because he is "doomed to go in company with Pain,

And Fear and Bloodshed, miserable train."

The happy warrior, or hero, lives in obedience to an indwelling law. In the "Ode to Duty" this law is identified with the power that does "preserve the stars from wrong," a power universal, cosmic, and divine—

L' amor che muove il Sole e l' altre stelle.

In man it is reason,

a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower.

Thus far, the second poem is a magnificent illustration of the grand and general truths enunciated in the first. But Wordsworth would not take these great steps forward in moral revelation without bearing along the sound and imperishable conquests of his earlier thinking. One of these, his own peculiar contribution to the store of human wisdom, was his sense of the sublime and prophetic in childhood. Reverence nature, was to him the first and great commandment; and the second was like unto it: Venerate the intuitions of childhood. Who, except Wordsworth, would have defined the hero as

the generous Spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought?

In these lines we have a spiritual link between the two poems whose theme is Duty, and the three that celebrate the divinity of Childhood and Nature. But before passing to the latter group, let us note that the

"Character of the Happy Warrior" is, by its origin and its tone, an elegy. Wordsworth was unwilling to obtrude his private grief upon the world; with lofty and solemn reticence, he utters in this poem no direct word about his brother; his grief and consolation are raised to a noble generality. And when surmising what particular heroic figures were woven together in the composition, we must not forget Michel Beaupuy.

Down to the end of the minstrel's invocation—*i.e.*, to the hundred and fifty-sixth line—the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle" is nothing more than a splendid border ballad. We have the conventional short metre, the customary trappings of romance, the local names, the blending of popular tradition with mediæval history. Sir Walter might have been proud of having written it, and wrote as well more than once. Then comes the wonderful turn. In four grave decasyllabic quatrains, stately yet tranquil, the poet's own voice dispels the scene he has conjured up: the baronial hall, the scutcheons, arms, and tapestries, the throng of lords and ladies, the ecstatic minstrel, dissolve and vanish; the light of day, our own day, trembles through the fleeting shadows. We hear, with a feeling which would have been incomprehensible to the audience thus dismissed, how the Clifford's heart was "soothed and tamed." For being yet a child when nature received him to herself, he had grown up the wisest and best of his wild race:

> Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

The conception is modern; more than that, it is thoroughly Wordsworthian. Many a poet would have been content with the song, would have deemed it a complete work of art, sufficient in itself. The great and original genius of Wordsworth, the power that consecrated him to the sublime office of transmitting feelings that flow from *religious* perception, would not allow

him to withhold the last touch, which made this poem immortal. The whole power of him is behind these four stanzas, the weight of his disciplined and constant purpose, the activity of his ardent love, the splendour of his intellectual light.

The great "Intimations" ode is a stumbling-block to prosaic and a temptation to over-speculative minds. To the former it seems a mass of disconnected though splendid beauties, and when they try to find its indwelling idea they either despise what they think they have discovered, as too thin and vague to be of much consequence, or condemn it as a profanely audacious attempt to meddle with things divinely hidden from human sight. To minds that love "those wingy mysteries in divinity, and airy subtleties in religion, which have unhinged the brains of better heads," the poem offers congenial employment. Wordsworth himself, in a most regrettable Fenwick note, made an unnecessary and almost humiliating concession to pragmatical and timid readers. "I think it right," he says, "to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief"—*i.e.*, belief in a prior state of existence. "It is," he continues, "far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its favour." This deprecation of popular judgment is unfortunate in several ways. Historically it misrepresents the author as he was when he wrote the ode, for there is no evidence that he then believed in a written "revelation," and every evidence that he did not believe in "the fall of man." And, furthermore, it has diverted attention from the central idea of the poem, an idea supported by his own experience and that of thousands, and has brought into undue prominence, even by denying his intention to do so, a subsidiary and purely speculative notion.

The ode was probably conceived in the spring of 1802,

immediately after he had written the nine lines which are its germ, and of which he used the last three as its motto:

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky:
> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now I am a man;
> So be it when I shall grow old,
> Or let me die!
> The Child is Father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.

On March 26, 1802, Dorothy records in her Journal: "William wrote to Annette, then worked at 'The Cuckoo,'" and, listening to the cuckoo's song, we remember, he could beget again the golden time of childhood. In the evening of the same day, she adds, "he wrote 'The Rainbow,'" and next day "William wrote part of an ode." On June 17, she says, "William added a little to the Ode he is writing." The poem was continued at intervals during the next four years, and appeared in the edition of 1807, after which it was never much altered. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Wordsworth's statement in the Fenwick note that "two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining part."

In these stanzas, with an exquisitely light touch the poet describes an experience which perhaps is rare—I have known many persons to disclaim it for themselves—but which has startled many sensitively organized youths, observant of their mental states. It is an experience that vindicates for childhood a superior delicacy of perception, a superior impressibility as compared with later years. So vivid are these sensations, so deep these emotions, that long afterwards, in favourable moments, they flash into consciousness. Science would probably say that some hidden coil of the brain unrolls. The person to whom these forgotten memories recur connects them rather with some object or incident which appears to have occasioned them, and they are called "recognitions." We seem to perceive again

something perceived long ago, and never since. It is like the repetition of a dream. To certain minds these flashes come not seldom, but chiefly before middle life. They illumine and measure the distance the soul has travelled, for they recall and place side by side with blunted and decaying faculties the fresh and glorious powers of unworn childhood. The momentary joy is succeeded by a sense of depression, as we realize that the years, our busy servants, have robbed us of life itself. This is the theme of those first four stanzas.

A natural deduction, and one, as we have seen, which Wordsworth would regard as highly significant, is that the perceptions and feelings of childhood have peculiar value. Compared with them, the testimony of later years is dull and confused. The moral instincts of childhood have a similar directness and vigour, and should be obeyed. The child, by his acute perceptions, his tense grasp of reality, and his unsophisticated habits of mind, is closer to truth than the man, and finds in nature an all-sufficient teacher. But here the poet checks himself, and he puts this inference to a test in the tenth and eleventh stanzas. The result marks a great change in his philosophy. Though acknowledging almost all that he had claimed for childhood, he remembers that there have been gains as well as losses, and sings:

> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind;
> In the primal sympathy
> Which having been must ever be;
> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Mankind claims him, and the sway of reason. But while thus extending his allegiance, he repeats his vows to nature:

> And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
> Forebode not any severing of our loves!
> Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
> I only have relinquished one delight
> To live beneath your more habitual sway.

The whole of "The Prelude" does not say more, as to the central principle that had governed Wordsworth's early life, and had lately been broadened, but not abandoned. A favoured childhood close to nature, the acceptance of Rousseau's doctrine of original goodness, a tempering due to rich experience of human love and reverent admission of painful duty—this is the history of Wordsworth's soul hitherto. The golden record runs through six great poems: "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe," "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," the "Ode to Duty," the "Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," and the "Intimations." A final great document in support of Wordsworth's creed is his "Answer to the Letter of Mathetes," published in *The Friend*, in 1809. Though I shall have more to say of it in its place, I cannot forbear quoting a glorious passage which restates the main theme of the "Intimations" ode. Speaking of the Generous Young Man, he says: "Granted that the sacred light of childhood is and must be for him no more than a remembrance. He may, notwithstanding, be remanded to nature, and with trustworthy hopes, founded less upon his sentient than upon his intellectual being; to nature, as leading on insensibly to the society of reason, but to reason and will, as leading back to the wisdom of nature. A reunion, in this order accomplished, will bring reformation and timely support; and the two powers of reason and nature, thus reciprocally teacher and taught, may advance together in a track to which there is no limit." And, again, he speaks of nature as "a teacher of truth through joy and through gladness, and as a creatress of the faculties by a process of smoothness and delight." Diffidence and veneration, he says, "are the sacred attributes of youth; its appropriate calling is not to distinguish in the fear of being deceived or degraded, not to analyze with scrupulous minuteness, but to accumulate in genial confidence; its instinct, its safety, its benefit, its glory, is to love, to admire, to feel, and to labour." As there are two types of mind, the synthetic and the analytic, the one that is impressed by

resemblances and the one that feels differences, so in the individual are there creative as distinguished from critical faculties, and the former are most alert in childhood.

That the central theme of the ode is the magisterial sanctity of childhood is further indicated by the three lines from "The Rainbow" which the poet prefixed to it:

> The Child is Father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.

"Piety" is here used in its original sense, of reverence for filial obligation. The Man is to respect the Child surviving in him, to obey its monitions, to work upon its plan. What, then, is the subsidiary idea, which the Fenwick note unduly emphasizes, upon which commentators have spent themselves, and which, to be sure, is elaborately indicated in the title of the ode? It is a surmise, nothing more, that the excellence of childhood may be an inheritance from a previous and presumably superior state of existence. This is not, like the other idea, original with Wordsworth, in the only senses in which any such thought can be original—that is to say, either inborn or something conquered and assimilated. It was altogether derivative, extrinsic, and novel to him. It is connected with no other of his writings. It is alien to his mind. He habitually poetizes the facts of nature and human experience, shunning equally the cloudland of metaphysics and the light mists of fancy. But he had, as his soul's companion, the greatest speculative genius our race ever produced; and a dream of a prenatal state of the soul, superior in happiness and wisdom, had been embodied by Coleridge in a poem several years before. It is the "Sonnet composed on a journey homeward, the author having received intelligence of the birth of a son, Sept. 20, 1796":

> Oft o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll
> Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
> Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past,
> Mixed with such feelings, as perplex the soul
> Self-questioned in her sleep; and some have said
> We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.

O my sweet baby, when I reach my door
If heavy looks should tell me thou art dead,
(As, sometimes, through excess of hope, I fear)
I think that I should struggle to believe
Thou wert a spirit, to this nether sphere
Sentenced for some more venial crime to grieve;
Did'st scream, then spring to meet Heaven's quick reprieve,
While we wept idly o'er thy little bier.

In his note to this sonnet, in the edition of 1797, Coleridge acknowledged his indebtedness to Plato's "Phædo." Plato's argument, or perhaps we should call it his poetical suggestion, is that "if there is an absolute beauty, and goodness, and an absolute essence of all things; and if to this, which is now discovered to have existed in our former state, we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them, finding these ideas to be pre-existent and our inborn possession—then our souls must have had a prior existence."

In Wordsworth this conception seems to have been merely derivative—how different, therefore, from most of his ideas, to which the praise in Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria" so justly belongs, when he says (Chapter XXII.) that a characteristic excellence of Wordsworth's is "a weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won, not from books, but from the poet's own meditative observation." "They are *fresh*," he adds, "and have the dew upon them."

As one who habitually rises late can hardly believe his senses when he sees yesterday's commonplace world transformed by dawn into an enchanted garden of trembling roseate mysteries, so we wonder and so we doubt in reading the "Intimations" ode. Its radiance comes and goes through a shimmering veil. Yet, when we look close, we find nothing unreal or unfinished. This beauty, though supernal, is not evanescent. It bides our return, and whoever comes to seek it as a little child will find it. The imagery, though changing at every turn, is fresh and simple. The language, though connected with thoughts so serious that they impart to it a classic dignity, is natural and for the most part plain. The metrical changes are swift, and follow the

sense as a melody by Schubert or Brahms is moulded to the text. Nevertheless, a peculiar glamour surrounds the poem. It is the supreme example of what I may venture to term the romance of philosophic thought.

If we bear in mind what is the important and profoundly Wordsworthian idea of the ode, and what the secondary and less characteristic notion appended to this, we shall find few difficulties of detail.

CHAPTER XX

CRISIS OF MIDDLE LIFE

THE great variorum edition of "The Prelude," published in 1926 by Professor de Selincourt, has confirmed the opinion which I expressed ten years before, that this poem was much altered by Wordsworth between the time when he began it, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and its publication after his death. In re-editing his works he was accustomed to revise them for the sake of euphony and exactness of description, and sometimes to soften the statement of his earlier social or religious views, making them more conservative and orthodox. "The Prelude," being the most intimate revelation of his experiences and personal beliefs and not intended for public perusal during his lifetime, was particularly subject to changes of the latter kind. Any man telling the story of his own life selects, omits, and points its incidents according to his present spirit and purpose. Wordsworth, knowing he was a great poet and would take his place sooner or later as one of the guides and teachers of mankind, desired to leave a memorial of what he had attained, rather than of what he had abandoned, and consequently the poem as printed in 1850 did not represent correctly his inner life as it was in 1805, and still less as it was between 1792 and 1802. He had altered it in two important and indeed essential respects: frank ardour for the Revolutionary cause, with all its implications, had given place to a more cautious and balanced tone, and more especially the pantheism of the early versions had been overlaid with orthodox theistic terms.

For these reasons we should not depend without question upon "The Prelude" in estimating the extent of the contrast between Wordsworth as he was before

middle life and Wordsworth as he was after the profound change which came over him then, and of which we have authentic records in "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle" and the "Ode to Duty." These two poems mark the turning-point in his life, the beginning of a complete reversal of his speculative views, and a significant alteration of his poetic style and methods. They should be read in the light of all the biographical knowledge we possess about their author. Their meaning is never caught by the casual reader.

Even as it finally appeared, there are passages in "The Prelude" which are, I believe, the real cause of its being held back so long. Without utterly defacing the picture, Wordsworth could not have told the story of his early manhood more guardedly, yet he feared that, even so, it might do harm. We must remember that one great national panic succeeded another while the poem lay waiting for the light. Napoleon was scarcely disposed of before "Reform" began to alarm the Tory mind; and between the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 there was little time to breathe. With an honourable though mistaken sense of obligation to mankind there may have coexisted a dread of the effect upon his own chosen course of life. Without minimizing the part played by modesty, I suggest that these other motives would be no less characteristic of Wordsworth. His conduct as we have observed it in his childhood, youth, and early manhood, was courageous, determined even to the point of obstinacy, and yet regulated by prudence in practical affairs. It was well said of him that he combined the qualities of a great poet and a country attorney.

The resultant of these inner powers and of certain external forces became apparent between 1803 and 1807. He was now middle-aged, a husband, a father, a property-owner. His confidence that through his writings he might affect the lives of his fellow-men was beginning to be somewhat widely justified. He looked forward to a future of influence, and seriously felt the responsibility

attaching to intellectual leadership. The years of obscurity were past. In them, without much interference from the world, and with few concessions, he had gone through many agitating spiritual experiences. He had read and travelled at his own discretion. It was unlikely that any new discovery in the realm of thought would startle or greatly attract him. He had long enjoyed intimate relations with the most contagious mind then existing. Coleridge's absence and silence had thrown him back upon himself, and caused him to go through a process of *recueillement*, in which he had estimated, co-ordinated, and sealed his own principles. At an earlier stage he had swung far to one extreme in political and social philosophy. Farther in that direction he could hardly have gone. The apparent failure of the French Revolution and the real danger to English liberty from the ambitions of Napoleon made it necessary now to alter his course unless he were to become futile. Real consistency demanded a readjustment of the old principles to the new facts, rather than a reckless continuance in the course of protest. Yet his backward swing was not violent. Its momentum was retarded by many a surviving element of friction. No man, however, can resist altogether the influence of respected friends. The conservatism of Walter Scott was so clearly a legitimate and indispensable part of his large and attractive personality that Wordsworth, in becoming more intimate with him, was almost forced to admire his political principles. Sir George and Lady Beaumont were ornaments of their class, and in every way worthy of Wordsworth's affection. It is no wonder if association with them modified his views on the whole subject of class distinctions.

From results which became visible after a few years, we may surmise that a change was taking place in his attitude towards those institutions, practices, and modes of expression, by which religious feeling is outwardly manifested. I cannot believe that the foundations of Wordsworth's religion were really shaken either in middle life or in old age. Nature and experience were still, I

think, the sources of his faith, reason its guide, and the whole round of life its proper sphere. But at this time he began to respect and appreciate, and later he learned to love, the specific means by which Christendom has attained and embodied religious conceptions. His own way had not been the beaten track, but he had never been either indifferent or intolerant in matters of religion, and now his interest really widened. He surrendered nothing of his own. He did not "go over" to popular Christianity. He learned to include it in the great circle of his sympathy. Unlike many others who have once been rationalists, and have later come into conformity with the Church, Wordsworth did not subject his reason to the sway of vague mystical impressions, did not call "belief" what was only hope and earnest longing. In a very considerable degree his acceptance of the terms and methods through which religion takes on a specifically Christian character was caused by political considerations. He had in view the general welfare of his country as well as his own personal needs. The elements common to the established Church and to Nonconformity were not what attracted him. It was rather the principle of establishment itself, the idea of a national conscience perpetually voicing its adherence to whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. In after-years he wrote much besides the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets" that may be described as Christian poetry; most of this, however, expresses not so often world-wide or even personal, as Anglican religion, considered with reference to national welfare. Though it is unfortunate that his genius should have thus limited its free play, we must remember that religion, in a far broader sense, was from the beginning, and continued to be always, the subject of his song. "The Old Cumberland Beggar," by the "semi-atheist" of 1798, is surely no less religious than the sonnet on "Old Abbeys" by the Churchman of 1822. Instead of an advance of faith, there was in the main a recession. In fixing his trust upon particular ordinances, he lost some of that generous and open-hearted feeling

which is of the very essence of religion. In so far as he became the supporter of a system, he surrendered his freedom. In accepting a tradition he lost the gift of prophecy. Nature and the universal heart of man spoke to him less of their divine mysteries.

Other reasons besides those that moved Wordsworth were meanwhile determining Coleridge to a somewhat similar course. His writings after his return from Malta have a changed tone. He has become a child of the century. He has left the narrow but solid ledge of rationalism, and is groping through mystical seas. He curses what he once adored. From 1807 we may date his appearance as the champion of Christian theology. But this is a new Coleridge. And it is pertinent to observe that his distrust of reason was coincident with, and probably consequent upon, a decline in moral strength. He came home more terribly enmeshed than ever in his evil habit, and profoundly discouraged. As the keen-eyed Dorothy Wordsworth saw at once, he was no longer the same man. The glory was departed. He was heart-struck, reduced, humiliated. And here the eternal question arises: Does a man in that condition see the truth more or less clearly than one who treads the heights of reason? This is not a subject which can be treated here. It has been discussed amply and frankly in the famous parallel between Pascal and Montaigne in the third book of Sainte-Beuve's "Port Royal." We can only note the fact that there was a complete and fundamental change in Coleridge's philosophy, and prepare our minds to judge whether this would affect Wordsworth.

Few men pass through the crisis of middle life without a loss of ideality. Wordsworth escaped this. But it cannot be denied that, while he held to his ideals with unweakened grasp, many of them were different from those of earlier years. He lost much of his confidence in human nature. His sympathies became less general. His admiration went out more and more to the privileged classes, to persons of distinction, to notable events in history. The poor and humble still figured in

his poetry, but in smaller proportion, in a less true proportion, considering the part they play in life. Liberty remained dear to him; but equality, which was a vastly more important and imperilled principle, now became a matter for doubt and endless qualifications. The change may not have amounted to apostasy; it was certainly reaction.

The crisis was sharp. Its result was unmistakable. It affected the course of his life and the character of his poetry. Looking at him as he stands in 1807, having then completed the five great poems which embodied the philosophy of his early manhood, and begun "The Excursion," which represents a later stage, we realize that his opinions henceforth will have a very definite trend. He has still a long life to live, but its vicissitudes will be slight, its outward history peaceful, its inner changes gradual and in one direction. Even had he not written any poetry, his life down to this point would have been worth telling; he would have a place among the English friends of the Revolution; and if he had expressed his philosophy in prose alone, he would remain an authority in æsthetic criticism. After 1807 his life is of interest almost solely for the sake of his art, for there is nothing else that distinguishes its last four decades, in any singular degree, from the lives of many other Englishmen of his time. Letters, anecdotes, records of his conversation, and other biographical material, are far more abundant for this later period than for the years when he was comparatively obscure. Owing to this fact, it is the aged Wordsworth that the world knows most about, and this is extremely unfortunate.

But I cannot agree with the opinion that he had produced nearly all his good work before 1808. His art, both as poet and as prose-writer continued to grow, and some of its most interesting developments occurred long afterwards. It still had fresh turns and quickenings. His versatility was only very gradually exhausted. His technical skill was never lost. Moreover, there came to him with passing years a deepening of conviction, which gave him increasing authority on many subjects.

We have observed a change in Wordsworth, due partly to the natural crisis of middle age, partly to disappointment at the course of political events, and partly to association with a new set of friends who held conservative views. The criticism with which his publications from 1800 to 1807 were met was not without its effect also. Sturdy as he was in holding fast to principles, he often found it possible to modify their application, or even to alter them if good cause were shown. This can be seen in the numerous revisions to which he subjected his poems. He took advice cautiously, even grudgingly, but, on the whole, the remarkable fact is that he took so much. By far the most telling criticism was that which appeared in *The Edinburgh Review*. It was scarcely the less effective because some of the articles dealt with his poetry indirectly, being reviews of Southey's books. It is amusing enough now to find Wordsworth and Southey dragged into court together, on a charge of rebellion against the laws of taste. Southey is treated as the more prominent and well-known offender. But a suspicion is entertained that in some way Wordsworth is the deeper and more dangerous conspirator. There has never been any justification for the term "the Lake School of Poets." Coleridge lived only a few years in the Lake country, and his poetry shows hardly any traces of that residence. To associate Southey's poetry in this way with Wordsworth's is to use language without thinking of its meaning. But the phrase originated early, and was, though misleading, convenient for reviewers. It was thought desirable to hold Wordsworth responsible for the poetical mediocrity of Southey, and to find them both guilty of entertaining the social heresies which Southey had long before recanted.

The Edinburgh Review was founded in 1802. In its first number appeared an article on Southey's "Thalaba." Ample satisfaction was here given to those conscientious scruples expressed in the motto of the magazine: *Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur.* It was written by Francis Jeffrey, who had been waiting for an oppor-

tunity to controvert the doctrine contained in Wordsworth's prefaces and exemplified in "Lyrical Ballads." Jeffrey had a high appreciation of good literature, ancient and modern, a high sense of the importance of poetry, and a sincere desire to protect the public from false teaching. The great value of the noble works included within the circle of his taste made him hesitate to break the ring at any point in order to include something new and different. But he was not unreasonable. He disapproved of Wordsworth's innovations on very strong grounds. To anyone holding Jeffrey's view of human nature they must ever be sufficient grounds. And in forming this view he showed remarkable penetration and a characteristically vigorous, massive way of pushing through evidence to a sound judgment of causes and motives. To suppose that his adverse opinion of Wordsworth's poetry was determined solely, or even chiefly, by the fact that he had a strong taste for the "classics," or, in other words, that he was so hampered by literary prejudices as to be unable to accept a novel artistic doctrine, is to do injustice to his intellectual alertness. The trouble lay deeper. His heart had not been touched by a true sense of human brotherhood. His prejudice was political. It might, indeed, better be termed religious; for it originated in a fundamental unwillingness to acknowledge the divinity in man. It is startling to find that the first words of his review of "Thalaba" stamp him at once as an enemy of the living light: "Poetry has this much, at least, in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago, by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question." False as this statement is in both of the propositions involved, it has a doctrinal, not an æsthetic basis. That he was preparing to attack Wordsworth as well as Southey is shown in the next paragraph, which begins: "The author who is now before us belongs to a *sect* of poets that has established itself in this country within these ten or twelve years. . . . That they are *dissenters* from the established systems in poetry and criticism is ad-

mitted, and proved, indeed, by the whole tenor of their compositions."

He remarks with creditable acumen that some of their leading principles "seem to have been borrowed from the great apostle of Geneva." He denies them any real originality, and detects as first among the sources of their material "the anti-social principles and distempered sensibility of Rousseau — his discontent with the present constitution of society—his paradoxical morality, and his perpetual hankerings after some unattainable state of voluptuous virtue and perfection." If the venturesome word "unattainable" and the slanderous word "voluptuous" were omitted from this charge, it would be just in every particular. The critic has discovered the real origin of what was most dynamic in the new poetry. He has laid bare its connection with a revolutionary view of society. He has also, by his hostile and contemptuous tone, disclosed his own position, and bound himself to a definite course of action. He is aware of what the new movement involves. These authors, he declares, "constitute at present the most formidable conspiracy that has lately been formed against sound judgment in matters poetical, and are entitled to a larger share of our censorial notice than could be spared for an individual delinquent." Setting aside for a moment their moral and political tendencies, he engages in a specious and plausible argument against the theory of diction and choice of subject propounded in Wordsworth's Preface to "Lyrical Ballads."

"Their most distinguishing symbol," he says, "is undoubtedly an affectation of great simplicity and familiarity of language. They disdain to make use of the common poetical phraseology, or to ennoble their diction by a selection of fine or dignified expressions. . . . A poet who aims at all at sublimity or pathos is like an actor in a high tragic character, and must sustain his dignity throughout, or become altogether ridiculous. . . . The language of the higher and more cultivated orders may be presumed to be better than that of their inferiors; at any rate, it has all those associations in its

favour by means of which a style can ever appear beautiful or exalted, and is adapted to the purposes of poetry by having been long consecrated to its use."

"The chief mischief of this new system is not confined to the depravation of language only; it extends to the sentiments and emotions, and leads to the debasement of all those feelings which poetry is designed to communicate. . . . The different classes of society have each of them a distinct character, as well as a separate idiom. . . . The love, or grief, or indignation, of an enlightened and refined character is not only expressed in a different language, but is in itself a different emotion from the love, or grief, or anger, of a clown, a tradesman, or a market-wench. The things themselves are radically and obviously distinct. . . . The poor and vulgar may interest us, in poetry, by their *situation;* but never, we apprehend, by any sentiments that are peculiar to their condition, and still less by any language that is peculiar to it."

The absurdity of such remarks is sufficiently apparent now, but we are in danger of forgetting that they probably met with the approval of most subscribers to *The Edinburgh Review* in 1802. And it is useful to read them now, in order to appreciate Wordsworth's originality and courage, and the extent of his ultimate triumph. But the passage that indicates Jeffrey's real animus—which, moreover, he takes no pains to conceal—is the following, in which he describes the moral character of the "new school":

"A splenetic and idle discontent with the existing institutions of society seems to be at the bottom of all their serious and peculiar sentiments. Instead of contemplating the wonders and the pleasures which civilization has created for mankind, they are perpetually brooding over the disorders by which its progress has been attended. They are filled with horror and compassion at the sight of poor men spending their blood in the quarrels of princes and brutifying their sublime capabilities in the drudgery of unremitting labour. For all sorts of vice and profligacy in the lower orders of society, they have the same virtuous horror and the same tender compassion. While the existence of these offences overpowers them with grief and confusion, they never permit

themselves to feel the smallest indigination or dislike towards the offenders."

Except for the gratuitous term "splenetic and idle," could the most enthusiastic eulogist have penned loftier praise? Could a clearer title to the name of Christian patriot have been bestowed upon the two poets? But Jeffrey thought he was condemning, not justifying. In *The Edinburgh Review* for October, 1805, he criticizes Southey's "Madoc," and again abuses the supposed "school." His grand opportunity came when Wordsworth's "Poems in Two Volumes" appeared in 1807. Losing no time, he flew to the attack, in the October number of *The Edinburgh.* Exulting, he unmasked his batteries, for this time the enemy was fully exposed. But what was the real purpose of these preparations? To crush the spirit out of a sensitive and happy man who, because he was more sensitive and more deeply happy than others, had felt impelled to take the world into his confidence as to the sources of his innocent delights; to shame him for telling of his childlike intimacy with nature; to make him resolve never again to lift the veil of conventional reticence. The only conceivable excuse for Jeffrey's onslaught is that he sincerely regarded Wordsworth as a menace to society. Expressing his relief that the demerits of the Poems free him from all doubt or hesitation as to the justice of his former censures of "Lyrical Ballads," he regrets that he did not declare himself against that work "with still more formidable and decided hostility." Finally, after denouncing Wordsworth's poetry as trash, except "when, by any accident, he is led to abandon his system, and to transgress the laws of that school which he would fain establish on the ruin of all existing authority," he retires with the complacent sense of having crushed this offensive "caterpillar of a commonwealth."

Byron's cruel and ignorant attack in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," 1808, helped to form in the public mind a false notion of Wordsworth. The lines that concern him are as follows. Pretending to address Southey, Byron says:

Next comes the dull disciple of thy school,
That mild apostate from poetic rule,
The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay
As soft as evening in his favourite May.

* * * * *

Who both by precept and example shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose.

* * * * *

Yet let them not to vulgar Wordsworth stoop,
The meanest object of the lowly group,
Whose verse, of all but childish prattle void,
Seems blessed harmony to Lambe and Lloyd.

It cannot be denied that Wordsworth was affected by the hostile criticism of Jeffrey and a number of less influential reviewers. Owing to several other causes, and yet also to this criticism, he drew inspiration henceforth far less directly from nature and more from history than had been his wont. The episodes of his own everyday life and of the simpler lives of dalesmen and chance wayfarers ceased almost suddenly to give him material for poetic interpretation. How complete the change was may be seen by merely examining a table of his poems, arranged by years, in the order of composition. Between the completion of "The White Doe of Rylstone," in 1807 and 1808, and the writing of "Laodamia" and "Yarrow Visited," in 1814, lie six or seven relatively barren years, though, of course, it must be remembered that in them "The Excursion" came to maturity. More significant than their infertility is the character of their lean product. The subjects bear no resemblance to those formerly chosen, and many startling examples of reversion to conventional poetic diction might be cited, of which no others, perhaps, are so extreme as the first lines of a poem written in 1812:

Mark how the feathered tenants of the flood, etc.

It really seems as if Jeffrey had succeeded in making him pay "due honour and authority" to "that ancient and venerable code," the "established laws of poetry." But so many other influences were at work on the poet, and the results were so complex, that we must consider

this epoch of his life more closely later, and meanwhile revert to "The Prelude," which was finished, at least in its original form, in 1805. It was kept in manuscript until after the poet's death, when it was published under the supervision of his secretary, Mr. Carter. The title, which is not a happy one, was suggested at that time by Mrs. Wordsworth. When "The Excursion" was published, in 1814, Wordsworth, in his Preface, made the following reference to the earlier work, now generally esteemed the greater, which we call "The Prelude":

"It may be proper to state whence the poem, of which 'The Excursion' is a part, derives its Title of THE RECLUSE.—Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. That Work, addressed to a dear Friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's Intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society; and to be entitled, 'The Recluse,' as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.—The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices."

The entire work had a threefold object: to test the poet's powers, to pay a tribute to the friendship and genius of Coleridge, and to serve as an introduction to "The Recluse." Its subject is nominally the growth of a poet's mind, and, indeed, many of the traits and experiences which it records are typical. Nevertheless, "The Prelude" is less remarkable for generality than for particularity. It really describes the spiritual development of its author. Wordsworth was a little apprehensive lest his friends might think him conceited in writing to the extent of nearly eight thousand lines about himself. He protested that his real feeling was diffidence and a shrinking from the more elaborate task of writing "The Recluse."

Where fate has played a part is in the fact that the author of this poem was a young man during the most important crisis in human history since the Reformation, and was drawn, by some power beyond our calculation or his, to the central scene of that great drama. Had he been born ten years earlier or later, the story of his life would have mattered much less to the world. In spite of many inferior passages and some that are obscure; in spite of frequent prolixity; in spite of many a page dulled with pedantic terms taken from the jargon of psychology, terms that retain no sensuous colour or movement whatever, and are mere intellectual counters, "The Prelude" is the greatest long poem in our language after "Paradise Lost." One might break it, somewhat rudely, into three consecutive parts: the first describing, in fragmentary fashion, the poet's boyhood and youth, and the scenes amid which he grew up; the second, more compact and continuous, narrating his experiences in France; and the third, speculative and dogmatic, setting forth a theory of the mind and of nature, and of their mutual relations. It is only in the last three books that this third subject entirely predominates. The first eleven books are less abstract. Readers to whom Wordsworth's philosophy seems unsubstantial in its foundations and narrow in its superstructure may therefore find satisfactions of their own

in the poem. But Wordsworth, with some awkwardness, it is true, tries to convince us that all parts of it are contributory to certain conclusions of a highly abstract kind. Happily, its high fortune does not depend entirely on the success of this endeavour. And yet there the endeavour is, and we must not lose sight of it.

In protest against the old psychology, which contented itself with classifying the powers of the mind, as intellect, feelings, and will, with their further analysis, he declares that the mind is one. Its thoughts have their source in feeling, and of feeling there is no conscious beginning. He seems to imply some sort of continuity between the soul of a new-born child and a larger, pre-existent life. He insists on the superiority of the "living mind" to all external things, and glorifies Imagination as a power which can work with nature and even constrain her. By thus exalting the mind of man above "the frame of things" as having an existence independent of nature, he places himself among the Transcendental philosophers. Not only in "The Prelude," but frequently in his other speculative poems, he proclaims himself a philosophical idealist. This view of the relation between man and nature was not his when he wrote the "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey" in 1798. Although even then the time was past when nature aroused merely

> a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye,

yet he would then have considered it blasphemy to speak of the mind of man as overleaping nature. He had recently learned to hear "the still, sad music of humanity," but he had also become aware of

> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
> And rolls through all things,

and was

> well pleased to recognize
> In nature and the language of the sense
> The anchor of *his* purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of *his* heart, and soul
> Of all *his* moral being.

That was the vision of a free, undaunted spirit, one who was not afraid to be called "a semi-atheist," and who did not care whether the promptings of his genius chimed with orthodox theology. One of the purposes of "The Prelude," painfully and redundantly achieved, is to renounce this pantheism, for it is nothing less. Wordsworth was travelling with Coleridge, with German philosophy, with his age. He was reacting against the great positive, naturalistic movement of the preceding century. He was breaking with his own past, abandoning his own faith. There are many reasons for regretting that he lost courage or hope at this point. Had he held fast to what was surely no debasing materialism and no morally enervating pantheism, he might have continued to be a living bond between the highest thought of the eighteenth century and that revival of science which was coming presently, and which makes the interval of reaction appear a time of weak fears and cowardly refusals. And there will always be readers who feel that his truest and least imitable poems are those in which he is content to follow nature, as one who finds in her all he needs to know. However honourable the scruples and the sense of responsibility which caused him to recede from that spontaneous acknowledgment of nature as a divine power, superior to man and yet approachable by man in a spirit of kinship, the step involved more than a sacrifice; it was a moral error. Ought not he to have remained content, to whom had been vouchsafed high intercourse with something so divine as the voice which spoke to him near Tintern Abbey, or the Wisdom and Spirit of the universe which still held fellowship with him in Germany?

Whether or not we regret that he left vacant the priesthood which had once been his, and which Shelley

was to accept later, we must acknowledge that there was more loss than gain for poetry. "The Prelude" relates only the beginning of the change. One is left to infer, on finishing its perusal, that the poet, having lost joy, the vital principle of poetic creation, has at length recovered it, and thus passed safely through the only danger to which his genius was liable. But the recovery of joy was followed by complacency, and this by self-consciousness, and this again by timidity. Of his complacency we have a foretaste in "The Prelude" itself, especially in the eighth book. He seems to be consciously leading up to a triumphant proclamation of his own success in obtaining a right view of nature and of man. This fault shows itself only in certain reflective passages—in those, namely, which were written in 1805 or inserted later. The passages of real reminiscence are free from it. The ninth, tenth, and eleventh books, which relate his experience in France, are more vivid and spontaneous, more fluently written, and more unhampered by "system," than the other parts of the poem. A great theme, sufficient for epic treatment, here gave him something of the epic poet's detachment. Considering "The Prelude" not now as the unfolding of a philosophy, but as a narrative, these books constitute its climax. It becomes more evident, at every reading, that his spiritual connection with the Revolution made him a thinking, suffering man. This connection gave him what Newman describes as "the true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values and determining their mutual dependence." He went to France a susceptible boy; he returned a man, with a philosophy and a purpose.

It is a thousand pities that he renounced this philosophy and changed this purpose. When they ruled him, and even while they were loosening their hold upon him, he wrote his best poetry. As a pæan of triumph the conclusion of "The Prelude," therefore, extending over the last three books, is premature. He upbraids

himself for having "scanned the moral world," and we ask, Without this moral scrutiny where would have been his contributions to "Lyrical Ballads"? He is at pains to renounce reason, having found a better guide in an instinctive reliance upon nature and the immemorial customs and faiths of mankind; but the time was at hand when instincts were to be interpreted as accumulated acts of reason. In the last book of all, which is relied upon to impress us most, we find his new attitude fully delineated. The author has now formally set up as a teacher of safe philosophy. His tone is pietistic, his plan drearily systematic, his language abstruse. He sees not men and women so much as bundles of psychological traits. He professes to have found or invented a new instrument for compelling nature to give up her secrets, and by means of it claims the power of looking beyond her mere facts to her spiritual laws.

This instrument, which he defines with elaborate care and describes as a transcendent function of poetic minds, is Imagination. The distinction which he draws between Imagination and Fancy does not always seem clear; they often appear to differ only in degree. But Wordsworth considered it vital. However that may be, the fourteenth book is an anticlimax. The style is neither fresh and simple, as in some of the earlier parts, nor dignified and austere, as in many high places throughout the poem. It is a style he rarely, if ever, used before 1805, but only too often in later years. Pure, colourless intellectual terms loom up like icebergs in almost every sentence. Of sensuous quality there is very little. The passion seems forced. The diction is almost as far removed as possible from "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." That the boldness of Wordsworth's genius has vanished is shown even by so small a matter as the frequent recurrence of the cautious double negative, the use of which became one of his worst habits of composition—*e.g.*, "endowments not from me withheld," "no insufficient plea," "not unworthy of regard." The summary of the entire poem, as given in the fourteenth book, describes the

stilling of a noble struggle. Somehow the poet's early solicitude for human welfare, the agonizing sympathy and the audacious hope, are set aside as evil; satisfaction with nature's balm and the established order of society replaces the old yearning, and is hailed as a moral conquest.

One curious detail must be noticed: the poet dates his change of heart much earlier than a careful study of his life would seem to warrant. We have seen that his conversion was scarcely begun before 1805. Yet, by foreshortening the time, he gives the impression that it occurred ten years before. It is very strange, for example, that in the seventh book, entitled "Residence in London," he records chiefly the mere surface-shows of the town, street scenes and public amusements, when we know, from the evidence of his letter to Bishop Watson and much else, that his mind was busy with deeper and more engrossing affairs. The fine humanitarian tone of that passage in Book XIII. (lines 186-204), which dates from before 1802, proves that the change had not come when it was written.

Wordsworth's genius, at its best, expressed itself in three large groups of poems corresponding more or less closely to three periods of his life. The poems of each group are related to one another, in that they refer to the same class of subjects and are bound together by a common purpose: the first group comprises most of his early works, their subjects being the unadorned features of nature and some of the common incidents of life which fell under the poet's observation, and the ruling purpose being the quite simple one of representing the truth, and of communicating the joy and strength which he derived from life. These poems were of a new kind. They represent the union of exact knowledge with creative imagination, of plain language with passionate feeling. They are at one and the same time science and art. They imitate nature without attempting to interpret her, implying thus the most profound reverence. Wordsworth as here we see him is almost unique among poets, and certainly supreme in this kind. "Lucy

Gray" will perhaps be remembered when all other English poetry of the century has been forgotten. The period ends almost abruptly in 1807.

The second group comprises those fine high endeavours of his to penetrate to a soul of things supposed to lie behind nature's impassive face. So long as Wordsworth remained faithful to his old ideals and constant in courage and self-confidence, his philosophy, too, is of the highest order of originality. We have in the "Intimations," for example, a kind of poetry entirely different in origin and purpose from the direct type just described; but it is almost equally characteristic of Wordsworth, and almost as lonely in its excellence. The period when Wordsworth could produce such poetry extended scarcely farther than 1807.

Throughout the rest of his life, except for a few instances when the spirit of his youth revived, his observation was oblique, and his reflective powers were dominated by principles not formerly his own, and not easily reconcilable with the best that he had been. Of the immense number of poems which he wrote in these last forty years, nearly all are upon a high level of attainment; but standing alone they would not suffice to justify a claim of great superiority, except in one kind of work—that is, the historical and political sonnet. Large as is his achievement in this third kind of characteristic excellence, he is by no means so great here as in his poems of simple life and his poems of pure reflection. "The Prelude" stands in the centre of his life-work because it represents all three of these kinds. It is based on the sound habits of direct and unprejudiced observation which gave us the short poems in "Lyrical Ballads" and in the edition of 1807. It is full of youthful fervours, which not even the over-scrupulous revisions of later years could extinguish. The truly Wordsworthian philosophy still animates its reflective parts, even though half repressed in a system from which poetry instinctively withdraws. And it indicates in advance the course of Wordsworth's later sympathies. Even "The White Doe of Rylstone" and "The Excur-

sion," which were finished seven years later, were conceived and in large part composed before the end of that fateful year 1807. Apart from a few surprises, such as "Laodamia," the muses held little in store for him except a vast number of splendid sonnets.

That beautiful poem, "The White Doe of Rylstone," has rarely been understood. It was begun in 1807, and completed and published in 1815. Based upon an ancient ballad in Percy's collection, "The Rising of the North," which commemorates the Catholic insurrection in the twelfth year of Elizabeth's reign, the period, the characters, and the setting are all of a kind which appealed to the romantic spirit. Feudal pride and valour, the pathos of monastic ruins, a subtle suggestion of the preternatural, and an atmosphere of moonlight —all these elements of Romanticism are present here. Never before had Wordsworth accepted so fully the complete mechanism of Romance. It might plausibly be inferred that this poem in every respect marked a fresh departure in technical method and a changed estimate of human values. But if it be studied deeply, it will reveal a meaning so intimately associated with Wordsworth's old ideals, that questions of time and circumstance, of technique, form, and fashion, fall into secondary rank. "The White Doe of Rylstone" is essentially one more great autobiographical poem. Though ostensibly objective and historical, it is the final message of Wordsworth's personal and original religion, the parting utterance of his poetic youth. The master of Rylstone Hall, with eight of his sons, joins the great Catholic earls, Percy and Neville. Francis Norton, his other son, endeavours in vain to dissuade them from taking up arms. The young man resolves not to fight on either side, but to follow the Northern levies, alone and weaponless, in order to be of service to his kindred in the hour of disaster. To his sister Emily, a Protestant like himself, he prophesies the coming desolation, but enjoins upon her a life of strict quietude at home. She is not to take sides, even in thought:

Farewell all wishes, all debate,
All prayers for this cause, or for that!
Weep, if that aid thee; but depend
Upon no help of outward friend;
Espouse thy doom at once, and cleave
To fortitude without reprieve.

The father and eight warrior sons are taken and slain. Francis, after comforting them in prison and trying to save their banner, which his sister's fingers had wrought, is likewise slain. The maid is left with nothing, seemingly, to live for—an exile, a wanderer

Driven forth like a withered leaf.

Yet strength remained in her loneliness, a cold, high self-possession:

Her soul doth in itself stand fast,
Sustained by memory of the past
And strength of Reason; held above
The infirmities of mortal love;
Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,
And awfully impenetrable.

Returning to her father's ruined domain, she was surprised one day by a visit from a white doe, which had once been her playmate, and henceforth, from the companionship and love of this faithful creature, she drew, even on that "trouble-haunted ground," comfort and peace:

With her Companion, in such frame
Of mind, to Rylstone back she came;
And, ranging through the wasted groves,
Received the memory of old loves,
Undisturbed and undistrest,
Into a soul which now was blest
With a soft spring-day of holy,
Mild, and grateful melancholy:
Not sunless gloom or unenlightened,
But by tender fancies brightened.

This is the song of one who had hoped for the success of a lost cause, and had been heartbroken over the event—of one, however, who had found balm in the quiet exercise of reason and the visitings of imagination.

Perhaps it is even possible that in the character of Francis, who abstains from violence for conscience' sake, Wordsworth paid tribute to the pacific principles of his own early manhood, when, as we have seen, the wickedness of war was an oft-recurring theme in his writings. There is more than this, a sense of the futility and transitoriness of action. A note of almost oriental renunciation runs through the poem. Human endeavour, the whole fabric of human deeds, are destined to pass away and leave no trace. Only Nature and Mind and the Peace of God endure. Salvation is found not through acting, but through suffering. The utmost that can be expected is consolation for hopes deceived, and this consolation comes unbidden, with gentle soft approach, from inward springs. Thus comforted, but with its active instincts rebuked, the soul begins

> its reascent in sanctity,
> From fair to fairer; day by day
> A more divine and loftier way.

We think at once of the concluding lines of the tenth stanza of the "Intimations" ode, realizing, however, that the poet has meanwhile risen to thinner air and a more attenuated philosophy:

> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind;
> In the primal sympathy
> Which having been must ever be;
> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Disillusion, he seems to tell us, lurks at the end of all effort. But when the ruin is most complete, Imagination, the power by which the mind admits to itself the healing touch of nature, can half regain what was lost. Other meanings this wonderful poem may have, but surely it teaches that active life is vanity that passeth away, though the soul, through suffering and submission to nature, may yet win communion with what endures

for ever. The essence of the whole poem lies in the lines prefixed to it, a quotation from "The Borderers":

> Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
> The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
> 'Tis done; and in the after-vacancy
> We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
> Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
> And has the nature of infinity.
> Yet through that darkness (infinite though it seem
> And irremovable) gracious openings lie
> By which the soul—with patient steps of prayer—
> May pass in hope, and, though from mortal bonds
> Yet undelivered, rise with sure ascent
> Even to the fountain-head of peace divine.

Wordsworth has been so often and so justly praised as the poet of joy, that it is worth while to realize to what depths of passionate regret he himself had penetrated. If he consoles us, it is because he at times was disconsolate. If he strengthens us, it is because he realized the weakness, the pathos, of humanity. It was a point of duty with him to keep silent his fears and heart-rending cares. Now and then they break through, however, and the revelation enhances our respect for him and enlarges his authority as a teacher of wisdom.

On the other hand, "The White Doe of Rylstone," regarded in connection with the general trend of Wordsworth's thinking at the time he wrote it, is a confession of human failure so sweeping that the Western mind refuses to join in it. Behind our intellectual, no less than our material achievements, throbs the vital spark of self-trust. And to the Occidental, self is chiefly reason and will. Ascetic moods of religion come and go, and no doubt an ascetic denial of reason and of will remains as a constant element in Christianity, warning us against too complete confidence in ourselves and in our works; but on the whole we refuse to believe that there is a fundamental antagonism between faith and reason or between faith and will. Protestantism, in particular, revolts against this assumption. Wordsworth's discouragement, we feel, was deeper than the facts of life warrant. We feel that the fault must have

been partly his own, that he had for some time been reading human nature too despondently, and therefore mistakenly. He had given up a hope which, after all, and in spite of every disappointment, makes life worth living. His confession of this loss leads us to infer that his intellectual and volitional powers had suffered a blow. Substituting the word Imagination for the word Faith, he seems to make the same retreat from rational and active existence that was recommended by St. Francis of Sales and by Pascal. If William Watson's famous lines were a complete epitaph, if

> Rest! 'twas the gift he gave; and peace! the shade
> He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun,

—if this were all, then indeed "The White Doe of Rylstone" should be accounted his final message. But there is so much more in Wordsworth than a lesson of renunciation that this poem does not fully represent him. There are lessons of confidence in humankind, of resolution, of trust in reason, of "joy in widest commonalty spread"; and these also are religious. His poetry imparts strength for combat as well as comfort to the defeated. It is loved by children, and childhood abhors the religion of despair.

If any reader of this biography be impatient at so close an attention to the meaning of one poem, ample justification may be advanced in Wordsworth's own words. "I have not," he declared to Sir George Beaumont, "written down to the level of superficial observers and unthinking minds. Every great poet is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing."

Apart from "The White Doe of Rylstone," "Laodamia," a number of important prose works, and about thirty political sonnets, Wordsworth produced little in the eight years immediately following 1807 besides finishing "The Excursion." The list is not short, after all, though by no means comparable with what he had achieved in the preceding eight years, or, indeed, in the eight that followed his graduation from Cambridge. Before considering the great prose treatises of this period

and "The Excursion," we must review the domestic and personal events which it included.

As we have already seen, Wordsworth, his wife and two children, his sister, and Sara Hutchinson, were living in the farmhouse at Coleorton, Sir George Beaumont's estate in Leicestershire, at the end of 1806. There they were joined by Coleridge and his son Hartley, a lively boy eleven years old. Coleridge had resolved to live apart from his wife, but still shrank from making the separation public, and hence final. For thus hesitating he was greatly blamed by the Wordsworths, who realized that he was only prolonging a useless struggle which would ruin his own life and bring no real good to Mrs. Coleridge and the children. He remained at Coleorton from December 21, 1806, till some time after the middle of February, when he and Hartley went to London to visit Basil Montagu. In the absence of the Beaumonts, Wordsworth superintended the laying-out of their grounds, which proved to be a very congenial task. He had considerable executive ability, which he was glad to exercise, and at this time of life felt the need of interrupting frequently the strain of composition. In the spring of 1807 he and Mrs. Wordsworth went to London, where they spent five or six weeks, together with Coleridge and Hartley, at Basil Montagu's house. They probably stayed for a time, also, at their brother's, the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, in Lambeth. The two-volume edition of poems was going through the press, and was published in May. Wordsworth was back at Coleorton on the 21st of that month. It is stated in the "Memoirs" that he was accompanied by Sir Walter Scott on his return. Scott was in London at the same time as Wordsworth, and going nightly into society; but of his travelling northward with Wordsworth there is no mention in Lockhart's "Life."

The domestic life of the Wordsworth family was becoming rather complicated. Sara Hutchinson lived with them. There were the three children—John, born June 18, 1803; Dorothy, born August 16, 1804; and Thomas, born June 16, 1806. Coleridge and his children

were always welcome. Visitors to the Lakes were beginning to seek the Wordsworths out. In a letter to Lady Beaumont, Dorothy says of her brother: "I cannot but admire the fortitude, and wonder at the success, with which he has laboured, in that one room, common to all the family, to all visitors, and where the children frequently play beside him." It was indeed admirable, and how different from the conditions under which he had been accustomed to work! What a change from the quiet and freedom of the old days before his marriage!

It is not from any letters of theirs, but from expressions to which Coleridge gave way in seasons of anguish much later, that we learn one of the most affecting secrets of all their lives—namely, that he was attached to the Wordsworth household by love for Sara Hutchinson even more than by love for William and Dorothy.

In November a new acquaintance had been added to the Grasmere circle. This was Thomas De Quincey, then twenty-two years old. Having read the "Lyrical Ballads" upon their first appearance, this, he declared, was the greatest event in the unfolding of his own mind. He found in them "an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds, teeming with power and beauty, as yet unsuspected amongst men." So deep did they sink into his over-sensitive soul that for several years he could not bring himself to inquire the names of their authors from persons who might easily have told him. He dreaded any contamination of the sacred subject by mere casual or unsympathetic remarks. At length, on May 31, 1803, having learned Wordsworth's name and address, he wrote him an appreciative letter, which drew from the poet a kind reply on July 29, with an invitation to visit Grasmere. This answer seems not to have reached the ardent young admirer until many months later, when the correspondence was reopened. Wordsworth made an appointment to receive him in London in April, 1807, but the plan failed. In his wonderful but extremely diffuse and ecstatic chapter on Wordsworth, in "Literary Reminiscences," De Quincey tells that he "twice under-

took a long journey for the express purpose of paying his respects," "twice advanced as far as the Lake of Coniston, which is about eight miles from the Church of Grasmere," but, he says, "catching one hasty glimpse of this loveliest of landscapes, I retreated like a guilty thing, for fear I might be surprised by Wordsworth, and then returned faint-heartedly to Coniston, and so to Oxford, *re infectâ*. This was in 1806. And thus far, from mere excess of nervous distrust in my own powers for sustaining a conversation with Wordsworth, I had, for nearly five years, shrunk from a meeting for which, beyond all things under heaven, I longed." Who has not had an experience which, though perhaps with a less notable object, resembled De Quincey's? At length the way was opened by the ever-helpful Thomas Poole, who enters from time to time in the story of these lives like Apollo on the ringing plains of Troy, giving help in time of need. In the summer of 1807 De Quincey appeared at Nether Stowey with a letter of introduction to Poole from Cottle. His purpose was to see Coleridge, who had recently been staying there. He found Poole himself worth seeing, and they went together over the grounds of Alfoxden talking of Wordsworth. Coleridge he discovered in the neighbouring town of Bridgwater, standing under a gateway and gazing about him. De Quincey's picture of this scene is immortal:

"In height he might seem to be about five feet eight: (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height;) his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically call fair because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess, which mixed with their light, that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more; and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street."

Towards the end of October, Mrs. Coleridge and her children, who were at Bristol, desiring to return to

Keswick, De Quincey offered to share with her the expense of a post-chaise and to accompany them to the north. He has given a vivid account of his sensations when they were descending the hill from the summit of White Moss, and came all at once, "at an abrupt turn of the road, in sight of a white cottage, with two solemn yew-trees breaking the glare of its white walls." With an extremity of language which appears less violent in its context than in a quotation, he says: "Never before or since can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself." Wordsworth came out to greet Mrs. Coleridge.

"I therefore," continues De Quincey, "stunned almost with the actual catastrophe so long anticipated and so long postponed, mechanically went forward into the house. A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad; very prettily wainscotted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year, with roses; and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jessamine and other fragrant shrubs. From the exuberant luxuriance of the vegetation around it, and from the dark hue of the wainscotting, this window, though tolerably large, did not furnish a very powerful light to one who entered from the open air. However, I saw sufficiently to be aware of two ladies just entering the room from a doorway opening upon a little staircase. The foremost, a tall young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her features that I had ever beheld, made a slight curtsey, and advanced to me with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment, before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth."

She was fair, "of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire."

THE LIVING-ROOM IN DOVE COTTAGE

From a photograph by Walmsley

"Her words were few. In reality, she talked so little that Mr. Slave-Trade Clarkson used to say of her that she could only say 'God bless you!' Certainly her intellect was not of an active order, but, in a quiescent, reposing, meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts."

De Quincey maintains stoutly that the poem, "She was a Phantom of delight," was really written about her. After further details of a most ecstatic description, he continues:

"Immediately behind her moved a lady, much shorter, much slighter, and perhaps, in all other respects, as different from her in personal characteristics as could be wished, for the most effective contrast. 'Her face was of Egyptian brown'; rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, (for she had rejected all offers of marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children,) gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict that was sometimes distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often, or rather generally, suffered in point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility, and, perhaps, from some morbid irritability of the nerves. . . . She did not cultivate the graces which preside over the person and its carriage. But, on the other hand, she was a person of very remarkable endowments intellectually. . . . The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular, and not systematically built up. She was content to be ignorant of many things; but what she knew and had really mastered lay where it could not be disturbed—in the temple of her own most fervid heart."

In so far as these portraits are the result of De Quincey's direct impressions at the moment of his first introduction to the Wordsworth family, they have very great value; but the reader will have noticed that they are in part made up of secondary opinions formed in later years. His description of Wordsworth himself is far too thin-spun to be quoted here entirely, but the main features are as follows: He was about five feet ten inches tall. His head was more impressive than even Charles Lamb's. Upon the whole, his figure was not good; his legs were "not ornamental"—whatever that may mean; his shoulders were too narrow and drooping, and "his walk had a wry and twisted appearance." He had a fine, sombre complexion, "resembling that of a Venetian senator or a Spanish monk." His face, says the describer, "was certainly the noblest for intellectual effects that, in actual life, I have seen, or at least have consciously been led to notice." He mentions its amazing likeness to a portrait of Milton in Richardson the painter's volume of notes on "Paradise Lost." It was a long face, the brow not remarkable for height, but rather, perhaps, for breadth, the nose large and a little arched, the mouth strong, the parts about the mouth noticeably prominent, the eyes remarkable, not for size, but capable of assuming, after a long day's toil in walking, a solemn and spiritual expression. He adds that both Wordsworth and his sister aged rapidly, one cause of this being "the secret fire of a temperament too fervid. Strangers invariably supposed them fifteen to twenty years older than they were."*

Near the close of 1807 Wordsworth rented a house, known as Allan Bank, which, though it would not be finished and ready for occupancy till six months later, had the advantage of being no farther from the centre of Grasmere village than Dove Cottage itself, and was large enough to hold his family and guests. Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson that they had engaged it with the idea that Coleridge and his two boys would come and live with them, although they were well aware of

* De Quincey, "Literary Reminiscences."

the odium they would draw upon themselves by having the children under their roof. She feared lest his irresolution would wreck the plan. Their experience with him at Coleorton had convinced her that it was not in their power to make him happy. As long as Mrs. Coleridge was not separated from him publicly he would continue to vacillate, and the peace of both households would be continually disturbed. It seems to have been expected also that the Clarksons should live with them for some time, and the uncertainty about Coleridge complicated that matter, too, though Dorothy writes: "If Coleridge makes our house only an *occasional* residence, there is no objection whatever on our side." In this same letter, which bears the date December 28, Dorothy for the first time mentions Henry Crabb Robinson, who was to become an intimate friend of herself and her brother. He was an old friend of Mrs. Clarkson, who, as Catherine Buck, had known him when he was a boy at Bury St. Edmunds.* She it was who helped to form the mind and heart of this generous disciple of great men. Because of her recommendation, he had, at the age of twenty, read Godwin's "Political Justice," which, he says, gave a turn to his mind, and in effect directed the whole course of his life. The reference in Dorothy Wordsworth's letter is as follows: "You will not accuse me of being selfish or vain, when I say that I should feel disposed to like your cousin Henry Robinson for his love of William's poems, if I had not before been prepossessed in his favour from your having spent so many happy hours of your youth in his society. I am not more confident of any truth than of this, that there

* H. C. Robinson's Diary, Sadler's 3-vol. edition, I. 30. Henry Crabb Robinson was born at Bury St. Edmunds in 1775, studied in Germany, and served for some years as a foreign correspondent and editor of *The Times*. He was a Unitarian, and upheld the principles of the Revolution, though bitterly opposing the Napoleonic régime. In 1809 he began the study of law at the Middle Temple, but his chief interests were politics, literature, and the personalities of living authors. He had a remarkable gift for making the acquaintance of celebrated men, of whom he knew, among others, Goethe, and many other leaders of thought in Germany, His admiration for Wordsworth was deep and lasting. His Diary furnishes many valuable details of the poet's later life.

must be something good in the heart that is much attached to my brother's poems."

Coleridge was in London giving a course of lectures at the Royal Institution, and writing for the daily Press. In a letter dated February 5, 1808, to Mrs. Clarkson at Bury St. Edmunds, Dorothy shows that she knew of his habit of taking opium:

"I am afraid you have not seen Coleridge. Poor Coleridge! the only good news we have heard of him is that his lectures are begun. We never hear anything but indirectly, and nothing has reached us but one detail of distressing illness after another; and I fear it will never be otherwise; for, setting aside that he takes no care to guard against wet or cold, I have no doubt that he continues the practice of taking opiates as much as ever. I wish you may have seen him. You will at least be able to tell us if he was in tolerable spirits. We are all well but Mary, who is as thin as ever I saw anybody who could go through the ordinary business of life and walk about cheerfully. William has finished his poem of The White Doe of Rylston, or the Fate of the Nortons, and it will probably be sent to the press in less than a month. The length of the poem is nearly 1,700 lines, and I think it very beautiful. It is to be published in Quarto. He means to demand 100 guineas for 1,000 copies. Before he publishes it he intends to send the manuscript to Coleridge."

A little later in February came the news that he had broken down, and on the 23rd Wordsworth hastened to his side. In about a month he was reported to be much better. "He has been too much employed," wrote Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson, "in thinking of his friends to have time to brood over his own misfortunes, and *that* I am sure is much better for him; though I believe he has a thousand times over more care and sorrow for his friends than for himself. He has been exceedingly anxious about dear Sara H. I trust more so than there was occasion; for she is at present very well."

It was in this month that the sad death of a poor farmer and his wife in Easedale, George and Sarah Green, who were lost on the fells in a snowstorm,

left their large family of children to the charity of the neighbours. The Wordsworths, besides undertaking to provide for the second daughter, were active in raising money to support the others. The poet himself returned to Grasmere on April 6, his journey having been hastened by bad accounts of Sara Hutchinson's health. He had stayed part of the time at Dunmow with Lady Beaumont's mother, had heard Coleridge lecture twice, and mingled somewhat with other literary persons.

Crabb Robinson met him at Charles Lamb's at breakfast on March 15, and went with him to call on Mrs. Clarkson, who was visiting friends not far away. He says: "Wordsworth, in my first *tête-à-tête* with him, spoke freely and praisingly of his own poems, which I never felt to be unbecoming, but the contrary." Unfortunately, this grew into a habit with Wordsworth, and was felt to be unbecoming by many of his acquaintances. It was due in part to a disinterested attachment to the principles which his poems illustrate, and in part also to the ignorant criticism of reviewers, whom he had few opportunities to answer. But there is no denying that he showed a want of tact and a certain grand style of egoism. The fault cannot be excused on the ground of the loneliness of his life, for it cannot be said that he had ever, for any great length of time, been cut off from social intercourse with keen minds; he had known many able and witty persons. But hitherto he had seldom mingled with large groups, in which idiosyncrasies were reduced to a conventional level. He therefore talked in London just as he would have done to a single listener on Helvellyn.

One of the few letters from Wordsworth to Coleridge that have been published is one dated at Grasmere, April 19, 1808, from which we learn of a second visit to the Lambs. "I now come to the White Doe," he writes. "In compliance with frequent entreaties I took the MS. to the Lambs, to read it, or part of it, one evening. There unluckily I found Hazlitt and his beloved [Sarah Stoddart, a great friend of Mary Lamb]: of course, though I had the poem in my hand, I declined,

nay absolutely refused, to read it; but, as they were very earnest in entreating me, I at last consented to read one book." He then gives Coleridge an exposition of the poem, and signs himself, with an expansiveness rare indeed in him, and which shows how much he loved his friend, "Most tenderly yours."

We catch glimpses of Wordsworth in faithful attendance on Coleridge. Lamb, in his note of invitation to Robinson, says: "I am afraid W. is so engaged with Coleridge, who is ill, we cannot have him in an evening." And Wordsworth left Coleridge's room in the *Courier* building in the Strand at seven in the morning on the day he left London to travel homeward. Much of his time this spring was spent in writing to his rich friends in behalf of the orphan children of George and Sarah Green. We learn incidentally from one of these letters—to Wrangham—that this old friend had offered to build him a cottage, and that the offer was declined.

In one of the last letters he wrote from the cottage that had sheltered him through the most productive years of his life—to Wrangham, June 5, 1808—Wordsworth discusses the kind of reading suited to uneducated people. He realized the immense importance of this subject, agreeing with Wrangham that books for the poor should be chiefly religious, but holding also that, since "piety and religion will be best understood by him who takes the most comprehensive view of the human mind," there should be a liberal allowance of other kinds. "I have many a time wished," he says, "that I had talents to produce songs, poems, and little histories, that might circulate among other good things in this way, supplanting partly the bad; flowers and useful herbs to take the place of weeds. Indeed, some of the poems which I have published were composed not without a hope that at some time or other they might answer this purpose." This desire has been in large measure fulfilled by a host of writers, and is likely to be fulfilled more and more. It reminds one of the finest and dearest ambition of Tolstoi.

In June, 1808, the Wordsworths removed to Allan Bank, half a mile away, on the other side of the vale. The house was unfinished, and workmen were still in it. Here began a far less harmonious and happy period than that which had been spent at Town-end. The building was ill constructed; it was exposed to the winds that sweep down Easedale, and the chimneys smoked abominably. Abundance of room rendered it possible to invite De Quincey, the Clarksons, and Coleridge and his children, to stay with them; and the consequences of this overindulgence in hospitality were unfavourable to work. A fourth child, Catherine, was born September 6, 1808.

Wordsworth had plucked Coleridge from the pit of horror by his presence and moral persuasion, saving his life, perhaps, and at least enabling him to fulfil his London engagements. Now he took him in, apparently with the intention of keeping him as long as he would stay. This was in September. De Quincey was at Allan Bank at the same time, torn between native delicacy on the one hand and a restless desire to satisfy his curiosity on the other. He had the instinct of a detective. The ink was never dry on his pen. He realized that posterity would treasure up every detail he might report. And no detail seemed insignificant to him, for he worshipped literary greatness. Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Marshall, December 4, 1808, from Allan Bank, telling her the house was "literally not habitable." The following passage of this letter contains much in little:

"At the time of the great storm, Mrs. Coleridge and her little girl were here, and Mr. Coleridge is with us constantly; so you will make out that we are a pretty large family to provide for in such a manner. Mr. Coleridge and his wife are separated; and I hope they will both be the happier for it. They are upon friendly terms, and occasionally see each other. In fact, Mrs. Coleridge was more than a week at Grasmere under the same roof with him. Coleridge intends to spend the winter with us. On this side of the paper you will find a prospectus of a work which he is going to undertake; and I have little doubt but that it will be well executed

if his health does not fail him; but on that score (though he is well at present) I have many fears. My brother is deeply engaged writing a pamphlet upon the Convention of Cintra, an event which has interested him more than words can express. His first and his last thoughts are of Spain and Portugal."

To Wordsworth's pamphlet we shall turn our attention presently. Coleridge's undertaking was his periodical, *The Friend*, a venture upon which he had embarked against the advice of his well-wishers, although Wordsworth, for one, while expecting failure, was unwilling to damp his ardour. I should think that, if Coleridge had found a good business manager, nothing would have been more suitable to the peculiarities of his genius than the opportunity for varied self-expression enjoyed by the owner and editor of a magazine. But he was unwise in his business arrangements. London or Edinburgh, or Oxford or Cambridge, might have been a good place for his undertaking; Penrith certainly was not, and at Penrith *The Friend* was to be printed. It is fair to say that difficulties of publication and distribution had more to do with its failure than any other cause. Its existence, though brief, was glorious. It was a brave effort on Coleridge's part to play the man; it drew from Poole and Montagu and Clarkson, and Stuart, the London journalist, and no one knows how many others, that kind of help which blesses those who give; it enlisted Wordsworth's anxious interest, and was kept going, towards the end, in large part by his contributions. Sara Hutchinson must not be forgotten; she transcribed almost every paper for the press. The first number was to have appeared January 7, 1809; it came out on June 1. The second number followed punctually on June 8, but No. 3 was seven weeks late. With many irregularities and changes of plan, the numbers continued fitfully to appear, until with No. 27, the last, on March 15, 1810, *The Friend* expired.

All this time Coleridge made his home with the Wordsworths, though often hovering between Allan Bank and Greta Hall or Penrith. His boys, Hartley and Derwent,

were in school at Ambleside, but appear to have spent their vacations and Sundays at Allan Bank. Including two maids and a little girl—probably Sally Green—there were regularly thirteen in the Wordsworth household, and on Saturdays and Sundays fifteen. They kept a cow and pigs, baked all their bread at home, washed part of their clothes, and mangled and ironed the whole. These details we learn from a letter of Dorothy's to Mrs. Clarkson, December 8, 1808, in which, after mentioning such matters almost casually, she goes on to tell of deeper troubles:

"Dear Coleridge is well and in good spirits, writing letters to all his friends and acquaintances, despatching prospectuses, and fully prepared to begin his work. Nobody, surely, but himself would have ventured to send forth this prospectus with not one essay written, no beginning made! but yet I believe it was the only way for him. I believe he could not have made the beginning unspurred by a necessity which is now created by the promises therein made. I cannot, however, be without hauntings of fear, seeing him so often obliged to lie in bed more than half of the day—often so very poorly as to be utterly unable to do anything whatever. To-day, though he came down to dinner at three perfectly well, he did not rise till near two o'clock. . . . Sara and he are sitting together in his parlour. William and Mary (alas! all involved in smoke) in William's study, where she is writing for him (he dictating)."

The Wordsworths took a six years' lease of their old cottage, and let it, partly furnished, to De Quincey, who by this time had become devoted to them all, and especially to the children. He went to London in the spring of 1809, and while there attended to the printing of Wordsworth's great political pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra. He returned in October, but spent several weeks at Allan Bank before taking up his residence at Dove Cottage. John Wilson (Christopher North) was by this time settled near the banks of Windermere, having been attracted to the Lakes by the presence of Wordsworth there. Little Dora was at school this spring at Appleby, where her father visited

her. It is worthy of remark that up to this time there had been, since boyhood, hardly any intercourse between William Wordsworth and his brother Christopher; Dorothy seldom mentions him. He was, however, becoming prominent in academic and ecclesiastical circles.

Sara Hutchinson, worn out with the nervous strain of compelling Coleridge to go on with his work, and agitated beyond endurance, left Allan Bank in the spring of 1810 to visit her brother, who was now farming in Wales. With her departure the combined moral force of the rest of the family was insufficient to uphold the enslaved man; he sank into abysmal despair, silent, unconscious of the beautiful world about him, coming out of his room only at meal-time, and then creeping back to his solitude. "His whole time and thoughts," wrote poor Dorothy, "except when he is reading (and he reads a great deal), are employed in deceiving himself and seeking to deceive others."

Is it any wonder that, apart from revising "The White Doe of Rylstone" and continuing "The Excursion," Wordsworth wrote so little poetry in all this time? Mrs. Wordsworth bore a third son, and fifth child, William, May 12, 1810. In the autumn of that year Dorothy Wordsworth visited her uncle, Canon Cookson, at Binfield, near Windsor, and saw something of the Lambs. Charles took her to see the sights of London, but an intended stay with him and his sister was put off because Mary had one of her attacks of illness. She returned to Grasmere before the middle of November. Coleridge, too, had gone to London in October. His departure, and the tragic estrangement from his old friends which then began, wrought so deep a change in Wordsworth's life that we must reserve the topic for a later page, going back now to mention the prose works into which the latter had been pouring his energy during the last three years.

Towards the end of May, 1809, Wordsworth published in London a long pamphlet or tractate. Its title is an explanation of its contents, and reads as follows: "Con-

cerning the relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, to each other, and to the common enemy, at this crisis; and specifically as affected by the Convention of Cintra; the whole brought to the test of those principles by which alone the independence and freedom of nations can be preserved or recovered." Although portions of it had been already printed in a newspaper, his intention from the beginning was to bring it out as a unit, and, notwithstanding his hope that it might influence contemporary politics, he designed it for all time. Two issues of the London *Courier*—in December, 1808, and January, 1809—contained the only parts which were printed in time to have any effect upon the question at issue. The plan of continuing the work in this way was frustrated by the remoteness of Grasmere. Documents arrived there late, and business arrangements were hard to make at such a distance. De Quincey, who was in London, kindly undertook to attend to the proofreading. But he had a peculiar and absurd system of punctuation, which annoyed the printers and caused delay; so that when the pamphlet appeared the crisis which occasioned it was past. But the principles involved are more lasting. The work is important as a definite exposition of Wordsworth's political philosophy sixteen years after his Letter to Bishop Watson, and as the last great example of a Miltonic tract.

The conquests of Napoleon in Germany, the Low Countries, and Italy, had been made against governments. His projects in the Iberian peninsula were resisted by the Spanish and Portuguese peoples. It was plain in this case that he was the enemy of liberty. When the British cabinet sent an army, under Sir Arthur Wellesley, to oppose the French in Portugal, the most ardent advocates of democratic and anti-military principles in England were, with few exceptions, as enthusiastic as any others in support of the movement. In August, 1808, Wellesley defeated Junot at Vimiero, but was immediately superseded by Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard, who signed a convention or military treaty at Cintra, according to which the French

army was allowed to return to France with its arms and booty. They had lost a great chance to free both Portugal and Spain and to cripple Napoleon. The news was received in England with indignation, but the government stupidly endeavoured to stifle the voice of the people. Wordsworth believed he was running some risk in denouncing the actions of generals and cabinet ministers. Men had been thrown into prison and heavily fined for milder language than he used. But it is doubtful whether any of his remarks were really libellous. Bitter as was his disapproval of what had happened, he kept the controversy, as far as possible, on a high level. He had possessed himself of all the facts he could collect, and entered into the closest details, showing remarkable knowledge and forensic power; yet his constant effort was to apply principles of eternal verity.

His style is as heroic as his theme. It has a volume and weight unequalled even by Burke, and matched only by Milton. Every sentence is like a gun of huge calibre. The detonation stuns and bewilders. One loses sight of the object in the smoke that follows each discharge. For immediate effect this artillery is far too great, and it is no wonder that a small edition of 500 copies failed to sell. But a reader who has intellect enough to understand these tremendous volleys and candour enough to admit his own deficiency will be slow to hold Wordsworth responsible for the failure. If we had heroic minds, this would be the language in which to address them. A student of rhetoric or of logic will find here a noble example, in the grand style, of both arts. They have been used in this pamphlet as the instruments of a passion that without them would have destroyed the mind in which it raged.

The toil Wordsworth bestowed on his treatise exhausted and broke him. So anxious was he about public affairs that during the expedition to Portugal he often walked in the dead of night to the top of Dunmail Raise to anticipate the post and get the newspapers. His letters that autumn and winter are full of the subject. He shared the feeling of panic which again

and again swept, and still sometimes sweeps, through the English people. His meditative and secluded life made him peculiarly susceptible to this infection.

Wordsworth wrote several numbers of *The Friend*, two of them being replies to an open letter, which filled the seventeenth issue, from his disciple John Wilson (Christopher North), who signed himself "Mathetes." The subject of these articles is the sacredness of childhood, the vitalizing power of nature, the authority of reason, and the value of joy as an index of moral health —in fact, the central doctrines of Wordsworth's philosophy, or Rousseau plus Godwin plus Wordsworth. Evidently Wordsworth, even as late as 1809, had not entirely abandoned the principles of the Enlightenment, and in so far as he had done so, it was not on grounds of abstract preference, but because he was driven by the seeming logic of events and the force of vulgar opinion. The reaction was political rather than spiritual, physical rather than intellectual. A favourable turn in public events—for instance, the death of Napoleon and the return to power of a sane democracy in France—would at this point have saved him from the abyss of despondency and distrust into which he was falling.

The twenty-fifth number of *The Friend*, appearing February 22, 1810, contained a long essay by Wordsworth, "Upon Epitaphs," and when the periodical came to an untimely end he had in manuscript two other dissertations upon the same rather appropriate subject.

Late in the autumn of 1809 Wordsworth wrote an anonymous introduction to a volume of drawings entitled "Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire," by the Rev. Joseph Wilkinson. The book was published early the next year. This introduction he reprinted, with some alterations, in 1820, with his sonnets on the River Duddon and other poems, and independently in 1822 as "A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England." This he called the third edition of the treatise. It contained much additional matter. In 1823 a fourth and revised edition appeared, and in 1835 a fifth, with further fresh

matter. This, the final text, was entitled "A Guide through the District of the Lakes in the North of England, with a Description of the Scenery, etc., for the Use of Tourists and Residents." Wordsworth's book is, as might have been expected, much more than a guide. It is an application of his moral philosophy, and of the principles of æsthetics deducible from them, to a particular object. This object, while unusually well defined by geographical boundaries, is in itself very complex, like almost everything else in nature. The treatment is admirably systematic and rational. The author proves himself to be not only an authority on topography, architecture, landscape gardening, and geology, but furnishes a model of analytical procedure in any field of research.

CHAPTER XXI

LOSSES AND FEARS

We have seen that by the autumn of 1810 Coleridge had sickened of *The Friend*, and was living at Allan Bank as an invalid and dependent. His friends nursed him, humoured him, tried to animate his flagging will. Their patience was inexhaustible, their love unfailing. They knew that, however great their own inconvenience was, it could not be compared with his remorse. He was racked with physical pain, which opium could no longer dull, and plunged in mental torpors which alcohol could no longer dispel. In a busy household including several young children, his irregular and selfish habits must have been little less than intolerable. Yet they were tolerated to the end. But late in October Basil Montagu, with Mrs. Montagu and their daughter, passed through Grasmere on their way from Scotland to London, and Coleridge made arrangements to travel with them. Montagu was an impulsive man, with plenty of means. He invited his old friend to live with him in his town-house, and Coleridge, fired with fresh hope and ambition, gladly accepted. Wordsworth, thinking it unfair not to warn Montagu, told him plainly that Coleridge's habits would make him a troublesome guest. This was done in Coleridge's interest as well as Montagu's. A quarrel with Montagu, which was sure to occur if they tried to live together, would have deprived Coleridge of one of his most useful friends. Apparently the advice was disregarded at first, and only acted upon when it was seen to be well founded; for it was at Montagu's house, a few days after their arrival, that poor Coleridge was blunderingly told that Wordsworth had predicted a failure of the plan. Montagu, who was not a prudent and exact talker, spoke in a moment of exasperation.

He probably exaggerated what Wordsworth had said, and in such a case the manner is quite as important as the matter. One can imagine the painful effort Wordsworth must have made to express his scruples, and how delicately worded they must have been. As they came to Coleridge's ears they were harsh and unfriendly. He conceived the monstrous idea that Wordsworth had commissioned Montagu to tell him that he had been an absolute nuisance in the former's family, and that he, Wordsworth, had lost all hope of him. Our information of what Coleridge thought he heard and how he felt is derived chiefly from his heart-breaking letters written eighteen months later, when reconciliation was in progress. Although he professed that he never liked or respected Montagu, and had no intention of staying in his house, yet he believed his report, adding interpretations which became part of the text, and telling Mary Lamb, with a flood of tears, that Wordsworth had given him up. He was at this juncture taken in by his kind friends, the Morgans, under whose roof a new chapter in his life began. And that old chapter, of a noble friendship, of a community of genius, of generous admiration, of faithful sacrifice, could never be opened again.

Coleridge suffered acutely, the more so as, through his own indiscretion, the story got abroad, to the discredit of all concerned. Wordsworth, for some time ignorant of what had happened, could only wonder why Coleridge never wrote. News came at last through Mrs. Coleridge. The whole circle, from Southey at Keswick to kind Thomas Poole at Nether Stowey, were rendered miserable. The Lambs, hearing only one side, were partially estranged from the Wordsworths. Coleridge's sons, Hartley and Derwent, who had seen their father happy, for him, at Grasmere, grieved at the change which they could not understand. "It would pity anybody's heart," wrote Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson, "to look at Hartley, when he inquires (as if hopelessly) if there has been any news of his father."

In the spring of 1811 the Wordsworths moved into the Rectory, opposite the church in Grasmere village,

and the Coleridge boys continued spending two days a week with them as before. It is pathetic to observe that William and Dorothy read *The Courier* newspaper, picking out articles and poems which they recognized as having been written by their old friend. How far he had fallen in their respect is shown by the following passage in Dorothy's letter to Mrs. Clarkson, just quoted:

"I am sorry to say (I would not say it but to you) that poor Coleridge's late writings in *The Courier* have in general evinced the same sad weakness of moral constitution to which you alluded in your last letter, as tainting his intercourse with his private friends, and his casual acquaintances also. They are as much the work of a party-spirit as if he were writing for a place—servile adulations of the Wellesleys."

The picture that Henry Crabb Robinson, in his Diary, paints of Coleridge in London is not at all melancholy. Robinson saw him for the first time in private, at Charles Lamb's on November 14, 1810. The pleasure was repeated the next evening. Coleridge was very "eloquent," and spoke of Wordsworth "with great warmth of praise, but objected to some of his poems." "Wishing to avoid an undue regard to the high and genteel in society, Wordsworth had unreasonably attached himself to the low, so that he himself erred at last." It is strange that Coleridge could talk so freely about Wordsworth if the mere thought of him occasioned anguish.

There is nothing in Wordsworth's correspondence to indicate that he was aware of the presence of Percy Bysshe Shelley, at Keswick. Yet for three months,—November, 1811, to February, 1812—the shores of Derwent Water resounded to the high voice of the poet who next to Wordsworth himself justifies Keats's line, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning." After his expulsion from Oxford, his flight with Harriet Westbrook, and their marriage in Edinburgh, it was at Keswick that the young poet found one of those "green isles" of happiness which he afterwards recalled in the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills." With the young couple came Harriet's sister, Eliza. They rented a

cottage, and made considerable stir in the village. The Duke of Norfolk entertained the Shelleys and Miss Westbrook for a week at Greystoke, and there, early in December, Wordsworth's old friend, William Calvert, was smitten with admiration for the wonderful youth. A little later, at Calvert's house, Southey, too, made his acquaintance, and promptly gave him neighbourly aid, besides undertaking to convert him from "atheism" by lending him Bishop Berkeley's works, and venturing to argue with him in metaphysics. It is very unlikely that some news of this glorious stranger did not reach Grasmere, but we may be sure that it would not be of a nature to attract Wordsworth. To one who had not met Shelley, he would be only an eccentric rich young man who had been expelled from the university for defending atheism, and had committed the folly of eloping with an innkeeper's daughter.

There is in the British Museum a manuscript letter from Shelley to Miss Hitchener, dated Keswick, January 2, 1811 [1812], in which he transcribes Wordsworth's "A Poet's Epitaph," and says: "I have transcribed a piece of Wordsworth's poetry. It may give you some idea of the man. How expressively keen are the first stanzas! I shall see this man soon." In the same letter he remarks: "Mrs. Coleridge is come. Mrs. Lovel, who was once an actress, is the best of them."

The year 1811 closed with Coleridge still unreconciled. I do not know that Wordsworth made any effort to get into communication with him. Dorothy was less obdurate, and perhaps she acted for her brother. Mrs. Coleridge, in a letter to Poole, October-November, 1812 (now in the British Museum), writes: "Numerous were the letters and messages I received from Miss W. to urge C. to write to her, and not leave the country without seeing them; but he would not go to them, and they did not come to him, so after staying 6 weeks he returned to give his lectures at Willis's rooms." One loving word would probably have blown away all the accursed darkness that lay between them. In a letter to Beaumont, dated November 16, 1811, Wordsworth writes: "Cole-

ridge is about to deliver a course of lectures upon Poetry at some Institution in the City. He is well, and I learn that *The Friend* has been a good deal inquired after lately. For ourselves, we never hear from him." We may well believe what Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson a few weeks later: "William bears all with calm dignity, neither justifying himself nor complaining of C." But how we wish he could have laid his dignity aside! Forgiveness and reconciliation never amount to much unless they are complete. Perhaps in this the fallen excel the upright. How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! Only after a regrettable lapse of time, and in a rather stern spirit, did Wordsworth take the step which it was his duty to take, as the stronger and happier man. It was a mailed hand that bore the olive-branch.

We find Wordsworth on May 6, 1812, writing to Mrs. Clarkson from Sir George Beaumont's town-house, in Grosvenor Square, London, whither he has come "with a determination to confront Coleridge and Montagu upon this vile business." His tone is self-righteous; his language not very tender. Nevertheless, in the course of a month he had accomplished his purpose to some extent, for on June 4 he wrote to Mrs. Clarkson, from the same house, that he had seen Coleridge several times, and had a pleasant walk with him to Hampstead. Yet there remained, as Coleridge sadly complained, "an immedicable *But*," and he wrote to Poole in 1813, referring to the "year-long difference" between Wordsworth and himself, compared with the sufferings of which, he said, "all former afflictions of my life were less than flea-bites." On the day of the walk to Hampstead, Wordsworth's little daughter Catherine died, at Grasmere, her ailment, as one reads the symptoms, being perhaps what is now termed infantile paralysis. De Quincey loved this child with touching devotion, and, writing to him of the sad event, Dorothy Wordsworth says: "It is a great addition to our affliction that her father and mother were not here to see her in the last happy weeks of her short life."

It is evident from Coleridge's letters at this time that he valued Montagu's opinion very little, and Wordsworth's very much; that matters had not been helped by the intervention of Mary Lamb; that writing to Sara Hutchinson and Mrs. Clarkson was of no use; and that the one thing needed was a personal meeting between the two old friends, a walk to Hampstead or anywhere else together.

The reconciliation had been so far effected by May 29, 1812, that Wordsworth spent the evening of that day at the Morgans, with whom Coleridge was living. Crabb Robinson had several meetings with Wordsworth at this time and got him to talk about himself.

"He spoke," we are told on May 8, "of his own poems with a just feeling of confidence which a sense of his own excellence gives him. . . . The approbation he has met with from some superior persons compensates for the loss of popularity, though no man has completely understood him, not excepting Coleridge, who is not happy enough to enter into his feelings. 'I am myself,' said Wordsworth, 'one of the happiest of men; and no man who does not partake of that happiness, who lives a life of constant bustle, and whose felicity depends on the opinions of others, can possibly comprehend the best of my poems.'" On May 31 Robinson writes: "Found Wordsworth demonstrating to Hamond some of the points of his philosophical theory. Speaking of his own poems, he said he valued them principally as being a new power in the literary world. Hamond's friend Miller esteemed them for their pure morality. Wordsworth said he himself looked to the powers of mind they called forth, and the energies they presuppose and excite as the standard by which they should be tried. He expatiated also on his fears lest a social war should arise between the poor and the rich, the danger of which is aggravated by the vast extension of the manufacturing system. Wordsworth defended earnestly the Church Establishment. He even said he would shed his blood for it. Nor was he disconcerted by a laugh raised against him on account of his having before confessed that he knew not when he had been in a church in his own country. 'All our ministers are so vile,' said he. The mischief of allowing the clergy to depend upon the caprice of the multitude he thought more than outweighed all the evils of an Establishment."

Under date of May 24, 1812, Robinson makes this interesting entry in his Diary:

"Joined Wordsworth in Oxford Road; we then got into the fields and walked to Hampstead. I read to him a number of Blake's poems, with some of which he was pleased. He regarded Blake as having in him the elements of poetry much more than either Byron or Scott. We met Miss Joanna Baillie, and accompanied her home. She is small in figure, and her gait is mean and shuffling, but her manners are those of a well-bred woman. She has none of the unpleasant airs too common to literary ladies. . . . Wordsworth said of her with warmth, 'If I had to present anyone to a foreigner as a model of an English gentlewoman, it would be Joanna Baillie.'"

In a letter to his brother, dated May 25, 1812, Robinson mentions having been at an evening party, where he felt uncomfortable because democrats were present; not that he disliked democrats himself, but he feared lest someone might utter Jacobinical sentiments which would give offence to Wordsworth, who was in the company. This is one of many examples of Wordsworth's power to impose his will and even his prejudices on persons about him.

On December 1 Wordsworth's little son Thomas died of measles, and a few weeks later Dorothy wrote: "My brother looks ten years older since the death of Thomas." Coleridge made some awkward and unacceptable attempts at condolence. William and Dorothy both wrote to him that nothing would do them so much good as his company and conversation; yet for some reason he kept away.

Wordsworth has been solemnly arraigned for accepting private patronage and a public sinecure. It is true that throughout his life he was much indebted to wealthy admirers. He could not have supported his family on the proceeds of his literary labours without descending to a more popular style or choosing subjects of more ephemeral interest. This fact was to him sufficient justification for accepting and even soliciting aid.

We need not have recourse to the vulgar argument that he did only what many other poets have done. He himself was too reasonable and too original to have tolerated such a defence. With him the true ground of action was his proud consciousness that he was repaying to mankind a thousandfold what a few representatives of society bestowed upon him. It was, he thought, his just dues, not charity, he received. We may readily grant his contention, and wish he had been even more liberally rewarded. There is, however, one thing which must not be forgotten; it is almost beyond the power of human nature to accept favours without some degree of submission. An irresponsible person like Coleridge could go on his way unchanged. Wordsworth would be anchored by a gift.

Thus it is with a sense of apprehension that we find him on several occasions, in 1812, asking Lord Lonsdale to find for him a Government position which shall add to his income without requiring much of his time. He writes, on February 6:

"I long hoped, depending upon my moderate desires, that the profits of my literary labours, added to the little which I possessed, would have answered all the rational wants of myself and my family. But in this I have been disappointed, and for these causes: firstly, the unexpected pressure of the times, falling most heavily upon men who have no regular means of increasing their income in proportion; secondly, I had erroneously calculated upon the degree in which my writings were likely to suit the taste of the times; and, lastly, much the most important part of my efforts cannot meet the public eye for many years, from the comprehensiveness of the subject."

Through Lord Lonsdale's influence, he received from Government, on March 27, 1813, the office of distributor of stamps in the county of Westmorland. The money value of this position appears to have depended upon the number of stamps purchased; it was estimated at from £400 to £600 per annum. That the Government was paying more than the service was worth is shown by the fact that Wordsworth relinquished £100 per

annum to the previous incumbent Mr. Wilkin, and that most of the work was done by a clerk, Mr. John Carter, who naturally had to be paid something. Exactly how much remained cannot be known, but it was a substantial amount, and made an important difference in Wordsworth's income. It was enough to trouble his conscience, which he soothed by thinking of the responsibility incurred by keeping the stamps in his house.

The change in his circumstances was marked by his removal from Grasmere. The Rectory was associated with the sad events of the previous year. It was separated only by the village street from the churchyard where his little ones were buried. He could now afford to live in a more commodious house. Such a one was available, two miles south-east, above the road to Ambleside. It was known as Rydal Mount, and formed part of the great estate of Sir Michael Le Fleming. Rydal itself was not even a village. There was no church, and the house commanded an uninterrupted view of the woods, the lake, and the mountains beyond. There was a human loss in leaving Grasmere which was to make itself felt in all the poet's future thought and writing. The humble intimacies of village life had been of inestimable value to him. They had kept open to him one of the main sources of his poetic vigour, the feelings and conduct of poor working people.

Rydal Mount a hundred years ago was a plainer house than it is now, yet large and comfortable. The situation is exceedingly beautiful. Here Wordsworth lived contentedly for thirty-seven years, and here he died. The family removed to it early in the spring of 1813. There is little else to record for this year. The Coleridge boys continued making their week-end visits. Of their father Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson on April 8:

"God bless him! He little knows with what tenderness we have lately thought of him, nor how entirely we are softened to all sense of injury. We have had no thoughts of him but such as ought to have made him lean upon us with confidential love, and fear not to confess his weaknesses."

Wordsworth's political opinions had by this time taken their final bent. In a letter to Wrangham, dated August 28, 1813, he declared that he favoured "resistance of Bonaparte by force of arms," and "adherence to the British Constitution in withholding political power from the Roman Catholics," and therefore was, and had long been by principle, a supporter of the Ministry. That he was not a man to stop short of extremes when he had once taken his direction, the following extract from a letter to his patron, Lord Lonsdale, dated February 9, 1814, will show:

"Everyone knows of what importance the equestrian order was in preserving tranquillity and a balance and gradation of power in ancient Rome; the like may take place among ourselves through the medium of an armed yeomanry; and surely a preservative of this kind is largely called for by the tendencies of things at present. . . . If the whole island was covered with a force of this kind, the Press properly curbed, the Poor Laws gradually reformed, provision made for new Churches to keep pace with the population (an indispensable measure)—if these things were done and other improvements carried forward, as they have been, order may yet be preserved among us, and the people remain free and happy."

What a respectable old Tory he had become, with his fear of disorder and of a free Press, his dependence on the Church as an ally of the State, his disapproval of "the tendencies of things at present," his willingness to see an armed force cover the land for the sake of "a balance and gradation of power"! This is not the language of poetry, nor had it been the language of Wordsworth's youth; but there was as yet no warrant for assuming that, because he had grown prematurely old in his attitude towards some of the greatest subjects which engage the attention of mankind, he was therefore incapable of artistic efforts of a very high order.

It is true that "The Excursion," which he had completed by the summer of 1814, contained the last abundant product of his old methods of work. But at the very time when his faithful attendants were copying

RYDAL MOUNT IN WORDSWORTH'S TIME

that work for the press, he surprised his friends by writing what Charles Lamb called "A very original poem: I mean original with reference to your own manner." "Laodamia" is quite distinct from anything he had previously composed. It is his first poem founded solely on classic myth, and elaborated strictly in the classic manner. He was at this time preparing his eldest son for college, and renewing his own acquaintance with Virgil and Ovid. His attention was caught by a passage from Pliny's "Natural History," perhaps in some commentary on the sixth book of the "Æneid," in which it is narrated that the trees which grew above the tomb of Protesilaus shot upward till they saw Ilium on the opposite shore of the Hellespont, whereupon they withered and began once more their everlasting growth. Choosing a stately measure, he recast the story of the Greek hero who came from the under-world by permission of the gods to speak eternal truths to his dear wife, Laodamia. The English poet not only gave to some of Virgil's greatest lines a memorable form in our own language, but enriched the world with serious and beautiful thoughts in immortally fresh expression, as when, speaking of the eternal world, Protesilaus says:

> Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains;

and again:

> The Gods approve
> The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul.

The lofty spirit of these lines was destined to breathe anew in the poetry of Wordsworth's greatest disciple, Matthew Arnold. The full import of the old myth is nobly expressed in the following stanza, in which the hero rebukes Laodamia's pitifully human desire for earthly love:

> Learn, by immortal yearning, to ascend—
> Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
> Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
> For this the passion to excess was driven—
> That self might be annulled: her bondage prove
> The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.

Had he in mind his parting with Annette Vallon at Calais? Is this poem an attempt to justify to himself his action upon that occasion by asserting, in covert terms, that his character and destiny were too high to be linked with hers? It is, at all events, a perfect work of art in which nothing could conceivably be altered without loss. Wordsworth tells us in a Fenwick note that it cost him more trouble than almost anything of equal length he had ever written. He revised it anxiously for later editions, in accordance with his principle that "it is frequently true of second words, as of second thoughts, that they are the best."

When Wordsworth, at about the time he wrote "Laodamia," spoke of Milton as his great predecessor, he might well have felt that for versatility at least he was worthy to stand the comparison. The words occur in a letter to Poole, dated April 24, 1814, in which the poet urges his old friend to engage with him in a scheme for raising money to send Hartley Coleridge through college.

Wordsworth's third visit to Scotland was made in 1814. With Mrs. Wordsworth and her sister Sara Hutchinson, he left home July 18. They spent some time on the shores of Loch Lomond, and travelled at least as far north as Dunkeld, but appear to have remained longest in the delightful region south-east of Edinburgh. They formed an intimacy with Robert Pearce Gillies, at that time a man of considerable literary promise, living near Hawthornden. He was editor of *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, and had a wide circle of acquaintances among Scottish men of letters. At Traquair Wordsworth met Dr. Anderson, editor of "The British Poets," and here they were joined by Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, in whose company the party visited the Yarrow. But on the whole the harvest of personal friendships was not more abundant than that of poetical reminiscences, which was meagre. Five poems, of quite inferior value, were the result of this journey, which appears to have lasted well into the autumn.

The following extracts from letters written by Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson, beginning in 1814, are evidence that

Wordsworth had dealt candidly with his wife and her family, and had by no means avoided all responsibility for his conduct in 1792:

[Postmarked 1814. Addressed to Mrs. Clarkson at Purfleet.]

"*Sunday night, 9th October.*

"I cannot help very much regretting that you forgot to tell me where to address you while you were there [in Paris], as I should have been exceedingly glad that you had seen the young woman whom I mentioned to you, the more so as a treaty of marriage is now on foot between her and the Brother of the officer Beaudouin whom I mentioned to you as having been at Rydale, and she and her Mother are extremely anxious that I should be present at the wedding, and for that purpose pressed me very much to go in October. This, unless such good fortune had attended us as being taken under your and your Husband's protection, we could not think of at this season, and therefore I wish that the marriage should be deferred till next spring or summer, because I desire exceedingly to see the poor Girl before she takes another protector than her mother, under whom I believe she has been bred up in perfect purity and innocence, and to whom she is life and light and perpetual pleasure; though from the over-generous dispositions of the mother they have had to struggle through many difficulties. Well, I began to say that I particularly wished that you could have seen them at this time, as through you I should have been able to enter into some explanations, which, imperfectly as I express myself in French, are difficult, and as you would have been able to confirm or contradict the reports which we receive from Caroline's Mother and Mr. Beaudouin of her interesting and amiable qualities. They both say that she resembles her Father most strikingly, and her letters give a picture of a feeling and ingenuous mind. Yet there must be something, I think, very unfavourable to true delicacy in French manners. Both C. and her Mother urge my going in October on this account, that, after a young woman is once engaged to be married, it is desirable that the delay afterwards should be as short as possible, as she is subject to perpetual scrutiny and unpleasant remarks, and one of the reasons which they urge for marriage in general is that a single woman in France, unless she

have a Fortune, is not treated with any *consideration*. . . . With respect to the mode of travelling, we, of course, must go as cheaply as possible consistent with tolerable comfort, and in an open carriage, because Sara cannot ride in a close one. Are any of the diligences so constructed? And supposing we can meet with no eligible companion from England, do you think we might venture to go alone? *I* think I should have no fears; but Sara would fain have a gentleman, and we can, at all events, desire Mr. Beaudouin to come from Paris to meet us at Calais. The expense, however, makes the last plan somewhat objectionable. Oh that Henry Robinson were going again! You know I like him well as a companion. And, still a thousand times better, oh that you were going! We should wish to carry presents of English manufacture. Can this be done without much risk or disagreeable trouble? . . . I wish you had sent me your address. I should have liked to have introduced our friend Beaudouin to you, and should have very much wished that it had been possible for you to see his brother. . . . I wish you had but visited La Fayette in his retirement. It was, however, a high gratification to see him anywhere. . . . Hazlitt's review [of "The Excursion"] appeared in *The Examiner*. It is not half so good a review as I should have thought he would have written; for, with all his disagreeable qualities, he is a very clever fellow. He says that the narrative parts of the poem are a dead weight upon it; but speaks in raptures of the philosophical. Now, that the narrative will be liked the best by most readers we have no doubt; therefore, we are most glad to hear that the religious and philosophical parts are relished. Of their merit I cannot entertain the faintest shadow of a doubt; yet I am afraid that, for a time, an outcry will be raised by many readers and many reviewers, which may injure the sale."

In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, begun on New Year's Eve, 1814, by William, and finished by Dorothy, the latter says:

"Sara is determined to visit you at Bury before her return to Rydale; but it is not possible for her to make any precise arrangements till our French journey is either set aside or the time fixed. April is the month proposed, and if the weather be tolerable we might go

as well then as at any other time; but I find that the king is to be anointed in June. All France will be gathered together, and I fear that there may be disturbances; for though all is quiet at present, it is evident enough that the party of discontented and turbulent spirits is very strong. On this account (as we cannot think of staying less than 9 or 10 weeks) I should wish our going to be *after* June—if it be at all. But I never, never so much dreaded to leave home as now, so deeply am I impressed with the image of what William and Mary have lately suffered in my absence, and with the uncertainty of all things. Besides the journey will be very expensive, which we can ill afford, and the money would be better spent in augmenting my Niece's wedding portion. To this effect I have written to her. She would not consent to marry without my presence, which was the reason that April was fixed. A few weeks will decide the point whether we go to France or not, and Sara will then be able to form her plans. At all events I think it would be the wisest way to take the first opportunity of going to Bury, yet that can hardly be before April, and then the other journey will most likely be forced upon us. I will if possible contrive, if I go, to see you on my way back, though for a short time, and will trust that you will soon be coming to Rydale. This is a plaguy business that I have teased you about. If it were not for my fears for what may happen at home, I could think of it with satisfaction—nay, with delight, for that dear young woman's sake, whom I believe to be thoroughly amiable. Oh that you were going again to France! Do you know of anybody going?"

Nothing could give a sharper sense of actuality, and of how the great movements of history wrench family life along with them, than Dorothy's next letters to Mrs. Clarkson. Napoleon's escape from Elba, his landing in France, the Hundred Days, Waterloo, the Restoration—how little we realize what havoc these changes must have wrought in the fragile network of society!

"*March* 16, 1815.

"We heard from Sara last night in answer to a proposal of mine that we should set off for France in the first week of May. This determination was made a

few days before the news of Buonaparte's entrance into that unhappy country had reached us; and, of course, our plans are for the present put a stop to. Whatever be the result of his projects, it is not likely that it would be prudent to go so soon as we had intended; and a very little time will show whether we can go at all or not. [Here follows speculation concerning Buonaparte's actions.] . . . We are very anxious, as I am sure you are, for every day's news, and it is one comfort, that suspense respecting the probabilities for or against France will soon be at an end. I do not at present carry my cares much farther. For the sake of our Friends I am truly distressed. The lady whom I mentioned to you from the first was a zealous Royalist, has often risked her life in defence of adherents to that cause, and she despised and detested Buonaparte. Poor creature! in the last letter which we had from her she spoke only of hope and comfort; said that the king's government was daily gaining strength, and Buonaparte's friends [coming over] in their hearts to the other side. A few days after the [evil tidings] reached her she would receive my letter containing the plan of our journey. Sara tells me that you had kindly proposed, in case we could not go to Bury, to meet William and me in London. It is now idle to talk of any plans in connection with a journey to Paris; but at any rate William has given up the idea of going to London this spring. I trust, however, that, if Sara does not go to Bury this spring or summer, we shall see you either there or in London at our return from France, provided it be safe to venture thither this year."

"*Tuesday, April* 11*th* [1815].

"My dear Friend,—

"In common with you, our minds have been occupied continually by the tremendous changes in France. Till we heard of the arrival of B. in Paris I never slept without dreaming of troubles connected with his fiendish ambition, and every night I was kept awake for hours. . . . We had given over taking a newspaper (except *The Courier*, which came from Keswick), but we could not exist without one sent directly to us. . . . Everybody here is anxious, but none a hundredth part so much as we are. We had a long letter from France written on the 19th and 20th. The letter was concluded at midnight. My Friend says:

'I hear troops entering the City. I think it is the avant-garde of Buonaparte. Good God! What is to become of us?' We have had another letter written the next day in miserable dejection; but she says no more of public affairs than that 'all is quiet.' Lodgings were taken for us in the Hotel du Jardin Turc [More?], Boulevard du Temple, in a pleasant part of Paris, as they describe it. Poor creatures, they say they are shipwrecked when just entering into port. Indeed it is a distressing situation, but I trust that we shall see them in Paris before the end of another twelvemonth.

"The White Doe is printing, and will be out, I hope, in two or three weeks. William will order a copy to be sent to you, but perhaps you can desire somebody to call for it at Longman's. The two volumes of poems are published, and he is sorry he cannot also spare you a copy of them; but he has only a certain number to dispose of. If you cannot afford to buy them, by applying to Henry Robinson, to whom William sends a copy, you can see them. I want you to read the new poems. Your receipt for a criticism in *The Philanthropist* is excellent, and we pray you earnestly to do the work yourself, for there is nobody here who can do it. It would be too independent in us to set about it; and Mr. De Quincey, notwithstanding his learning and his talents, can do nothing. He is eaten up by the spirit of procrastination; but if once in two or three years he actually does make an effort, he is so slow a labourer that no one who knows him would wish to appoint him to it." [She urges Mrs. Clarkson to write something to hasten the sale of The Excursion, saying: "That is all we care about. If this edition were once sold I should not have a moment's anxiety afterwards."]

In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, dated June 28 [1815], it appears that Dorothy had charge of the children at home while William and Mary were visiting the Clarksons at Bury, and were at Bocking and London and Coleorton. She speaks of her brother's "unconquerable agitation" when anything ails little William. "But strange it is," she declares, "that I can talk so long of private concerns when I have so much cause to be anxious for the arrival of this night's post, which is to bring tidings of the fate of nations. Upon the Amble-

side coach this morning was affixed a paper, 'Great News—*Abdication of Buonaparte*,' but no particulars."

In a letter of "Aug. 15" [1815], after a long outburst against the French and their English admirers, and the expression, "Would that all the English had Prussian hearts, and that our generals and counsellors had the soul of Blucher!" she says:

"It is impossible for me to think of going to Paris this year. We have had letters from our Friends written just after the return of the king. They were in great joy at that event, and urged me and my companions to go, all being safe and quiet. At the same time they waited our determination respecting Caroline's coming over. We could only answer that the time of meeting my Br. and Sr. was gone by, and that we could not appoint any particular plan, knowing of nobody about to return from Paris, and having no friends in London to whom we could with propriety entrust her, but we proposed that the Mother should look out for some person or persons coming to London, to whose care she might be consigned till we could hear from her of her arrival there. This I trust may not be difficult, as Madame Vallon has a numerous acquaintance. I wish you had been in London in lodgings. The great difficulty will be there; for people who might be relied upon for the journey must be continually coming from Paris."

Dorothy was not able to attend her niece's wedding, which was postponed till next year, as the following letter to Mrs. Clarkson shows:

"*April* 4, 1816.

"You ask me if I mean to go to France this spring or summer. I wish it very much, but William and Mary are unwilling that I should venture so soon. For my part I believe that there is nothing to fear for an obscure individual like me, and I believe William would consent provided I could hear of proper companions for the journey. I wish therefore that if you hear of anybody going who would be likely not to object to let me be of their party for the journey, I wish you would lose no time in letting me know. I do not like to put off year after year. Another war would make it impossible, and if I do not go when I can I think it may

be out of my power to go at all, and my motives for the journey are very strong. The young person is married to Mr. Beaudouin's Brother. We have just had a letter from them both, written a month after their marriage. I believe him to be a noble-minded, excellent man, and she seems to have well-grounded hopes of happiness, provided poverty can be kept out of doors, but though their present income is very well for two persons, it is not enough for a family. Mr. B. has a place under Government, and will have, they assure us, a certain increase of income in a short time; besides C.'s mother has the promise of a place for herself or one of her family in recompense for services performed by her for the royal cause; but I fear she may wait long for this, as the poor king has not wherewithal to reward all who deserve it. In case of Mr. B.'s death his widow will have half the amount of his present income as a pension. Mr. Eustace Beaudouin is still one of the Gardes du Corps. He is much attached to his sister-in-law, and has given us a very pleasing account of her. The mother's details of the wedding festivities would have amused you. She was to give the fête, she who perhaps for half a year to come will feel the effects of it at every dinner she cooks! Thirty persons were present to dinner, ball, and supper. The deputies of the department and many other respectable people were there. The bride was dressed in white sarsenet, with a white veil—' was the admiration of all who beheld her, but her modesty was her best ornament.' She kept her veil on the whole of the day. How truly French this is!"

On February 20, 1816, were married, by a magistrate, in Paris, Jean Baptiste Martin Baudouin and Anne Caroline Wordsworth, her father, "Williams Wordsworth, propriétaire, demeurant à Grasmer, Kendan, Duché de Westermorland, en Angleterre," giving his consent by affidavit.

CHAPTER XXII

"THE EXCURSION"

"THE EXCURSION" was published in a sumptuous quarto in July, 1814, with a wretched dedicatory sonnet to the Earl of Lonsdale, a short prose Preface, and 107 introductory lines of magnificent poetry, now printed as the last lines of "A Fragment of The Recluse." The price was two guineas. The plan of executing a great work, a long philosophical poem, which should embody the results of his experience and thinking, had been formed before even the first two books of "The Prelude" were composed. It has been discussed with Coleridge. It had finally taken in Wordsworth's life a supremacy contested only by desires for public service, such as we find translated in his tract on the Convention of Cintra. Yet with all the many explanations of his purpose which exist in his notes and correspondence, one can form no precise idea of what it was. This much, however, is plain; there was to be a poem, in three parts, entitled "The Recluse." "The Excursion" is the second member of this projected whole. Of the first part, only one Book was ever written, the splendid lines known as the "Fragment of The Recluse." This gives no clue as to how many books were intended to follow, nor with what topics they were to deal. Of a third part nothing was ever written, and there is no trace even of a plan. "The Prelude" is a separate work, and one would scarcely imagine, from reading "The Excursion," that it was not an independent poem. How it was to have been related to Parts I. and III. is not evident. We may take for granted that "The Recluse," that is, the entire group of poems, was carefully planned, though Coleridge's bewilderment, on finding "The Excursion" quite a different thing from

what he had expected, leads to the conclusion that an original and much grander design was abandoned. "The Excursion" as a whole has not in itself that unity which doubtless the projected work would have had, and which "The Prelude," taken by itself, actually has. There is no apparent reason why it should end where it does, and its purpose is not obvious. In the main, the first half contains the statement of a philosophical position, and the second half a number of human stories which are supposed in some way to establish or illustrate it.

The formal scheme of the whole is simple. The poet is represented as meeting accidentally a respected friend, an old Scottish peddler, whose travels have enriched his naturally powerful mind. This man, the Wanderer, relates the story of a poor woman whose happy home was broken up by "the plague of war," but who endured her fate with quiet courage. The description of the Wanderer, and this tale of Margaret, fill the First Book, which is in many ways distinct from the other eight. Much of it was written at Racedown and Alfoxden. The scene of Book One is in the south of England, but with the opening of Book Two and from that time to the end we are unmistakably in the Lake country.

The Wanderer, who is a Christian optimist, well furnished with theological dogma, and rather grimly triumphant in the apparent failure of the age of reason, invites the poet to walk with him to the lonely pass which connects Upper and Lower Langdale, there to visit the Solitary, a man who has withdrawn from a world in which his hopes have been baffled and his faith in God and man shaken. The Solitary tells the story of his life in Book Three, and the Wanderer in the Fourth attempts to correct his despondency by showing that communion with nature and the exercise of imagination are sources of divine knowledge, and capable of lifting the soul above the rough ground where reason stumbles. In Book Five all three descend to "a large and populous vale," which in most of its features is

the Vale of Grasmere, where they enter the churchyard and church, commenting on what they see. The Pastor joins them, and supports the Poet and the Wanderer in their efforts to correct the Solitary's views. The Sixth Book opens with a eulogy on the State and Church of England. The Pastor, looking at the green mounds of the dead, recalls the lives of many former members of his mountain parish. The mere recital of human stories, with no effort to point a moral, awakens in the Solitary a certain zest for things as they are. The Seventh Book is a continuation of the Sixth. In Book Eight the four speakers enter the parsonage, and the talk turns to a criticism of science, the rise of manufacturing industry, and the degradation of the agricultural population. In the Ninth Book the value of state schools and compulsory education is eloquently proclaimed; the Wanderer declares that an active principle pervades the universe; the Pastor identifies this spirit with the God of Christendom, to whom he utters a prayer of gratitude; and finally the Solitary, deeply affected, departs. "What renovation had been brought" to this dejected man will, if the poet receives encouragement from hope and gentle hearts and lofty minds, be told in future labours—*i.e.*, the Third and never-written part of "The Recluse."

A captious criticism might deny that there was sufficient connection between the theoretical and the practical parts of the poem; but it seems to me rather an evidence of Wordsworth's fidelity to nature that he refrained from distorting even imaginary facts to suit the most cherished theory. He realized that the most common events are the most important, and yet that common things do not wear, save to a poet's eye, the outward marks of their significance. So the unity of "The Excursion," as a philosophical treatise, is not impaired by the contrast between its abstract speculative part and the simple tales which follow. We have here an instance of what is perhaps the only proper method of building up a philosophical system. But as a work of art, designed to charm the senses and produce

an effect of smoothness and delight, the poem is no doubt marred by this violent contrast of methods.

What is the philosophical doctrine of "The Excursion"? First of all, that the universe is ruled by a spiritual Person, much like ourselves at our best, with affections and a will. Secondly, that human life, on the whole, is morally admirable and worth while, especially in view of the poet's belief in the future existence of souls. Thirdly, that correspondences exist between the human soul and external nature in its original beauty, or even as modified by man working in the spirit of nature, correspondences by means of which may be enjoyed a communion with the divinity existing in all things fair.

"The Excursion" marks the third phase of a great literary duel between optimism and a doubting mood which at least bore some semblance of pessimism. The first phase was represented by Pope's "Essay on Man"; the second by Voltaire's "Poem on the Lisbon Earthquake" and his novel "Candide." The French poet entered the combat with deeper seriousness and better skill than Pope. Shocked by the latter's easy acceptance of appearances, he appealed to history and individual experience to disprove the shallow faith that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Wordsworth, bidding the victor turn and meet a fresh antagonist, widens the field of argument so as to include not only the phenomena of observation, but the objects of faith. If there is a merciful and all-powerful spirit in the universe, the face of disaster is altered, and what seems waste may be the seed of future gain. In the light of eternity it may be that events seemingly of the utmost perverseness may prove to have been ordained for good. Furthermore, in the lives of many men and women who have to outward appearance been failures, compensations even in this world may be discerned—patience learned through suffering, humility through defeat, strength from striving, and many another virtue easily overlooked except by the eye of love. And it is always with the eye of love that Wordsworth studies

his characters. In one after another of the sketches which illustrate "The Excursion," unexpected kindness and tenderness are discovered in harsh or dull or merely ordinary persons, and some of those who were in their time esteemed most unhappy are found to have drunk from hidden springs of joy.

The poet offers no new argument in favour of personal immortality. He is fain to rest content with mere assertion, and here, certainly, his character-sketches lend little or no support to his theory; for if we are convinecd that there is less evil and unhappiness in life than we supposed, if the life and death of men are seen to be similar in majesty and naturalness to the life and death of trees, we shall feel less need for a doctrine of future compensation. Yet Wordsworth, without leading up to it, insists upon the doctrine. The Wanderer, who no doubt voices the author's theological opinions, says:

> I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore
> Are glorified; or, if they sleep, shall wake
> From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.
> Hope, below this, consists not with belief
> In mercy, carried infinite degrees
> Beyond the tenderness of human hearts;
> Hope, below this, consists not with belief
> In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,
> That finds no limits but her own pure will.

The force and frequency with which the poet enunciates these sublime commonplaces should not be mistaken for argument. He merely proves that he is himself convinced. He goes so far as to conclude, from the strength of his own feelings, that instinct and subconscious apprehensions, and even superstition, are truer guides than reason. He as much as says that a man had better trust the judgment of remote and savage ancestors than his own. It is a plea for obscurantism. But it is not merely this. To poets more than to other men, and to Wordsworth more than to other poets, belongs a faculty for discovering those precious yet subtle truths which the net of reason is too coarse to catch. "The Excursion" is a vindication of this faculty, which may be

defined as the power of interpreting Nature by Imagination. Through exercising it, we are told, primitive man discovered the rudimentary laws of astronomy, peopled the streams and groves with divinities, and developed a spirit of reverence. Speaking to one who is supposed to represent a rationalistic age, the Wanderer says:

> Access for you
> Is yet preserved to principles of truth,
> Which the imaginative Will upholds
> In seats of Wisdom, not to be approached
> By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
> With her minute and speculative pains,
> Opinion, ever changing.

The poet of "The Excursion," it should be distinctly noted, claims for the faculty of immediate vision a vast though vague superiority over the understanding. To support this claim, he brings only transcendental proofs, the cry of the heart, the mind's impatience. He is far enough now from the main principle of the Enlightenment—that the supreme distinction of man is his understanding, and that by this, as a touchstone, all emotions, instincts, faiths, and revelations, must ultimately be tested. Speaking generally, the religion and the poetry, the music, painting, and sculpture, the politics and social order, of the nineteenth century, till near its close, owed their peculiar tone and direction to an acceptance of the doctrine which Wordsworth was now proclaiming—the doctrine of immediacy, of direct spontaneous apprehension, of the soul's freedom from all trammels, either of the senses or of logic. Science, on the other hand, from which a fresh art and a renovated politics have grown, remained on the whole faithful to the humbler philosophy of the eighteenth century and of Wordsworth's better period. Humbler I say, though the charge made against it, a hundred years ago, was that it aspired too much.

To what extent Wordsworth in "The Excursion" shows the influence of German transcendentalism, of Kant and his followers, and particularly of Schelling, is another part of the subject. Even if traces of such in-

fluence are found, they may be due to conversations with Coleridge, rather than to Wordsworth's own reading. He needed not, at all events, to look abroad, or even to Plato and the English Platonists of the seventeenth century, for his favourite theme—namely, that the peculiar act of poetry is to indicate where and how imagination may interpret nature. We may fairly credit him in so far with originality, with passionate originality. He knew from experience that a poetic interpretation of nature sets men free from timid calculations, lifts them over unnecessary processes, brings them out of themselves, and puts them in a larger world than they could otherwise enter. After the famous description of a sea-shell whose murmurings express

> Mysterious union with its native sea,

the poet exclaims:

> Even such a shell the universe itself
> Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
> I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
> Authentic tidings of invisible things;
> Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
> And central peace subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation.

Unfortunately, the poet is not content, as in the "Lines Written above Tintern Abbey," to proclaim his joy in this discovery. He shows that he is irritated with those who find their highest satisfaction elsewhere. The real antithesis of imagination is not reason, but apathy, as he virtually admits in his Argument to the Fourth Book; yet it is reason, after all, which he attacks in the text.

Unquestionably, Wordsworth, at this stage of his development, was inclining to a philosophical attitude which was the very opposite of the one he had maintained under Godwin's influence. The strength of his imagination had even in childhood made him lean in the direction of mysticism. From Rousseau he may have received an additional impulse. And now the restraining influence of Godwin was withdrawn. The essence of this type of philosophy has been very fairly expressed

by Mr. Bertrand Russell in his essay on "Mysticism and Logic," as "the belief in insight as against discursive analytic knowledge; the belief in a way of wisdom, sudden, penetrating, coercive, which is contrasted with the slow and fallible study of outward appearance by a science relying wholly upon the senses." Developing this idea, he continues: "It is common to speak of an opposition between instinct and reason; in the eighteenth century the opposition was drawn in favour of reason, but under the influence of Rousseau and the romantic movement instinct was given the preference, first by those who rebelled against artificial forms of government and thought, and then, as the purely rationalistic defence of traditional theology became increasingly difficult, by all who felt in science a menace to creeds which they associated with a spiritual outlook on life and the world."

But we must always be on our guard against the common unthinking view that imagination deals with unrealities, and the almost equally false view that it deals only with the general, and not the particular. Nor does it operate only by a process of comparison. Imagination works primarily by appreciating that which is unique, and which therefore cannot be wholly expressed in terms of anything extraneous. This, at least, is the first step. Every object in the universe is unique. Not all poets are imaginative, by any means, but an imaginative poet understands the things of nature by exercising what we may call, in a phrase of M. Bergson's, "the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it, and therefore inexpressible." In thus reverencing the concrete, science and the highest poetry agree, and they have their reward in the discovery of laws which are both general and spiritual. Wordsworth, by reporting faithfully the particularities of nature, was able to do justice to the material world. Only by appreciating it could he transcend it, for the spiritual life, so far as we *know*, is inherent in the material.

In controversy, Wordsworth loses charm in proportion as he displays power. He shows a desire to carry everything before him. We feel that he is not generous. In this poem a figure is set up, called the Solitary, who is supposed to have suffered many illusions during the Revolution. Moreover, he has been embittered by the death of his wife and children. Quite gratuitously it is assumed that, because he had entertained "an overweening trust" in "the transcendent wisdom of the age," therefore he

> through the course
> Of private life licentiously displayed
> Unhallowed actions.

This is unfair to the poor Solitary, and still more so to the Reverend Joseph Fawcett, his prototype. The dramatic effect of the poem is weakened by thus making one of the speakers a man of straw. He is under suspicion from the first. His smiles are said to be "sardonic" and his words "sarcastic." The reader feels this injustice, and would be very glad to see the Solitary triumph over his pharisaical opponent, the Wanderer. The latter, who is a philosophical prig, is shocked to find, on the sacred soil of England, a copy of Voltaire's "Candide"—

> dull product of a scoffer's pen,
> Impure conceits discharging from a heart
> Hardened by impious pride!

If even the most appreciative and grateful readers feel that somehow "The Excursion," in spite of many noble qualities, is not quite a success, the chief reason for discontent may be this unbecoming eagerness of Wordsworth, the controversialist, which has made him unfair to one of the chief speakers in the dialogue. No other objections that have been urged against this great poem have much weight. To say it is too long is to beg the question. To call its subject-matter prosaic is to imply that the highest flights of speculation and the infinitely touching details of actual life are unsuitable for poetic treatment. Or is it that the treatment is unpoetical? Here we must discriminate between mere

style and the general pitch of the work. That it is pitched in a poetic and not a prose key would be evident to anyone who should try to rewrite or retell even a few lines of it. There are defects of style, the worst being the use of long parentheses and double negatives, and the piling-up of phrases when a sentence is already structurally complete. But the diction is in the main suitable both to the subjects discussed and to the speakers. There is, to be sure, a jarring discrepancy between the minute and homely realism of the narratives and the Wanderer's eloquent speeches. On one page we have the simple details of his bringing up, and on the next he speaks as sublimely as Milton's Raphael, and, like him, to an audience of two. A certain pietistic flavour, something new in Wordsworth, is perceptible here and there. It is assumed, for example, that men of science are necessarily unimaginative, cold, irreligious,

> Lost in a gloom of uninspired research.

We deplore the fact that Wordsworth had surrendered so much of his natural independence as to accept this foolish view, and must be prepared for many other instances of a change. Such things do not disturb our respect when we find them in the pages of Cowper, where at the very least they sound pleasantly quaint; but in Wordsworth they indicate a moral decline and a break with his own past. There are unnecessary passages, chiefly of description. Certainly, however, those readers at least who do not complain of Cowper's leisurely pace, or the vast redundancy in Swinburne, or Tennyson's elegant embroidery in "The Idylls of the King," might, one would suppose, easily tolerate a few hundred unnecessary lines of Wordsworth. That the poem comes to no striking climax is due perhaps to the fact that it is only the second part of a trilogy. That it is badly named must be admitted. So much for its shortcomings! They are far outnumbered and outweighed by features of beauty and manifestations of wisely directed power. The poem is full of minor attractions besides the interest

of its great philosophical theme. For one thing, it is pre-eminently the poem of the Lake country, and in no other work of Wordsworth or anyone else has the life of a particular "nook of English ground" been portrayed with more distinctness and poetic truth. There are dozens of passages the full force of which can be felt only by one who has lived in the vales and known some of their inhabitants of the old stock. The poet tells what he *saw*: the dull red stains and tufts of wool left on corner-stones by sheep, the lamb sheltered by its mother on a sunny ledge—we feel more grateful to him for noticing these than for his descriptions of sunsets, which other poets have not failed to observe. The house of the ingenious sporting parson, which is depicted so minutely, still stands beside the road from Grasmere to Wythburn. In Dorothy's Journal we have a dozen records of stopping there for tea, and the Simpsons, who lived there, were at one time the only other educated people in the vale. The substance of this sketch at least—and we may safely assume that it is the case with most of the others—was obtained by direct and long-continued observation. True scientific and true poetical methods are much the same, after all. One is reminded of Henri Poincaré's remark that facts which have a chance of recurring are simple facts; and, as if he were actually thinking of Wordsworth's process, he again says (in his essay on "Science and Method"): "What we [men of science] must aim at is not so much to ascertain resemblances and differences as to discover similarities hidden under apparent discrepancies."

"The Excursion" is singularly rich in variety. It is like one of the larger Lake-country rivers, the Rothay, the Brathay, or the Derwent, in the great number of reaches that diversify its course, no two of them alike, and every one a world.

After all, however, the chief element of biographical interest in this poem is that, scarcely less than "The Prelude," it is a commentary on the Revolution. Even the great doctrine of the "life" of what men call

"inanimate" objects is a part of the levelling process favoured by the Revolution. In one sense "The Excursion" is intended to demonstrate the failure of Revolutionary hopes and the resulting prostration of those who held them. Let us admit our failure, the poet seems to say, and retrieve our error by building on a broader basis. To be sure, the undercurrent of Book One flows in the opposite direction. In spite of revisions, it still shows its relationship to "Guilt and Sorrow" and "The Female Vagrant." The life of the poor is described as if from within, by one who was himself separated by no barrier of caste from the social world of the unfortunate Margaret. War is considered from an economic standpoint and without regard to national pride, glory, or honour.

We rejoice that, though the poet recanted from the philosophy of Revolution, he still preserved those sympathies which made him the poet of Revolution. He scorned the fundamental doctrine of aristocracy, namely, that God has seen fit, in His inscrutable wisdom, to withhold from the mass of mankind the perception of those moral truths upon which political coherence depends. In a passage of great eloquence (Book IX., lines 206-257) he asserts the equality of all men in the world of sense and in the common possession of reason, imagination, conscience, and the assurance of immortality, concluding:

> The smoke ascends
> To heaven as lightly from the cottage-hearth
> As from the haughtiest palace. He, whose soul
> Ponders this true equality, may walk
> The fields of earth with gratitude and hope;
> Yet, in that meditation, will he find
> Motive to sadder grief, as we have found;
> Lamenting ancient virtues overthrown,
> And for the injustice grieving, that hath made
> So wide a difference between man and man.

"The Excursion" was received by Wordsworth's friends with deep respect, by some of them with enthusiasm, and by one with disappointment. It was much noticed in the reviews. Among that small

portion of the public who took any interest in poetry it appears to have established his reputation as an author who had done something "big," though the number who actually read it was probably small. Scott's novels and poetical romances, Byron's poems, and the newspaper accounts of Napoleon's last campaign, left little opportunity for doing justice to a work of such length and depth. Upon the intellectually vulgar, who are ever ready to ridicule genius, an ineffaceable impression was produced by the first sentence of Jeffrey's review in *The Edinburgh*, "This will never do!" They were glad to have the matter so quickly and amusingly settled. In consequence both of the favour and of the disfavour met by the poem, it became famous at once, and henceforth Wordsworth was often—too often—known as "the author of 'The Excursion.'"

Charles Lamb, thanking Wordsworth for an early copy, pronounced it the noblest conversational poem he had ever read. He said he recognized the story of Margaret, having remembered it since the time he first saw its author, at Stowey. He makes a comical protest against the amount of description of mountain scenery. Himself this has not overpowered or discouraged, though "Mary seems to have felt it occasionally a little too powerfully"; she thought it doubtful whether by Wordsworth's system a Liver in Towns had a Soul to be Saved. He flies to the rescue on the question of the dulness of "Candide"; it was dull even to him, who had "a wider range in buffoonery—too much toleration perhaps." He challenges the poet to declare whether he is a Christian or whether the Pedlar and the Priest speak only as dramatic characters. He wished to review the poem in *The Quarterly*, but was too busy in the early part of the autumn with extra work at the East India House. When his article finally came out, late in the year, it had been so disfigured by Gifford, the editor of *The Quarterly Review*, that Lamb's face burned with vexation as he read it. "Every warm expression," he wrote

to Wordsworth, "is changed to a nasty cold one;" "the eyes are pulled out and the bleeding sockets are left."

Henry Crabb Robinson first saw a copy of the "great new poem" at Norwich, on August 13, 1814.

"It has," he wrote, "afforded me less intense pleasure on the whole, perhaps, than I had expected, but it will be a source of frequent gratification. The wisdom and high moral character of the work are beyond anything of the same kind with which I am acquainted, and the spirit of the poetry flags much less frequently than might be expected. There are passages which run heavily, tales which are prolix, and reasonings which are spun out, but in general the narratives are exquisitely tender. . . . Wordsworth has succeeded better in light and elegant painting in this poem than in any other."

We must remember that Robinson was a lenient reader. He was one of Wordsworth's first disciples, and by nature loyal. And his acquaintance with German poetry and metaphysics had accustomed him on the one hand to the use of plain diction in verse, and on the other to any amount of prolixity. He frequently recurs to the subject of "The Excursion," which he reread with increasing approval.

Southey was unstinting in his praise. Wordsworth was anxious for a favourable verdict from Poole, and doubtless got one. He had thoughts especially of Poole when describing the ill-effects of manufacturing industry. There was by this time something like a Wordsworth circle in London, including even so incorrigible a romancer and sentimentalizer as Leigh Hunt. Flaxman and Haydon belonged to the number. Especially after the appearance of Jeffrey's damnatory criticism in *The Edinburgh Review*, it became a touchstone of good taste to have read and enjoyed the poem.

Coleridge's judgment, which of course Wordsworth most anxiously awaited, was long withheld. He finally explained his attitude, in a very manly letter, making no attempt to conceal the fact that he was disappointed. His criticism went far below the surface, to the design

and substance of the poem. He knew how all-important to Wordsworth it was that this supreme effort should show increase of power and prove a memorable contribution to the world's intellectual wealth. Yet, as he compared the ideas in "The Excursion" with those he remembered having discussed with his friend, he felt that they were meagre, unsystematic, and often commonplace. He traced in outline the great philosophical poem which he had in mind, such a poem as a Christian Lucretius should have written, but the world had never seen. Perhaps Wordsworth might have written such a work, with Coleridge at his side. The combined genius of the two would certainly have been required.

The first hint of Coleridge's dissatisfaction is found in a letter of his to Lady Beaumont, dated April 3, 1815. He writes: "Of the Excursion, excluding the tale of the ruined cottage (the story of Margaret, begun at Racedown), which I have ever thought the finest poem in our language, comparing it with any of the same or similar length, I can truly say that one-half the number of its beauties would make all the beauties of all his contemporary poets collectively mount to the balance: but yet—the fault may be in my own mind—I do not think, I did not feel, it equal to the work on the growth of his own spirit." He conjectured that the inferiority "might have been occasioned by the influence of self-established convictions having given to certain thoughts and expressions a depth and force which they had not for readers in general." This is a perfect formula for a whole swarm of objections urged by many readers against most of Wordsworth's poetry. With time, as other men's thoughts and expressions have proved more or less ephemeral, and Wordsworth's have in an eminent degree held their own, this class of objection has tended to disappear. Wordsworth must have felt sorely tried when Coleridge, no matter with how much dignity of phrase, uttered the common charge. For it amounted to denying that he possessed that insight into the common heart of man which was

the source of half his greatness, and it was a condemnation of his artistic method, the method upon which he once thought Coleridge and he had fully agreed.

Passing to his other objection, Coleridge continued: "Whatever in Lucretius is poetry is not philosophical, whatever is philosophical is not poetry; and in the very pride of confident hope I looked forward to The Recluse as the *first* and *only* true philosophical poem in existence. Of course, I expected the colours, music, imaginative life, and passion of *poetry*; but the matter and arrangement of *philosophy*; not doubting from the advantages of the subject that the totality of a system was not only capable of being harmonized with, but even calculated to aid, the unity (beginning, middle, and end) of a poem. Thus, whatever the length of the work might be, still it was a *determinate* length; of the subjects announced, each would have its own appointed place, and, excluding repetitions, each would relieve and rise in interest above the other."

In short, he hoped that his strong-willed friend, whose superiority he so ungrudgingly admitted, would do in verse what he himself had vainly dreamed of doing in the easier medium of prose. He was convinced that what the world needed most was a systematic and, at the same time, literary statement of philosophic idealism, together with a glowing demonstration of its vital identity with Christian doctrine and history. After his terrific recoil from the "sensational" psychology of Locke, he had flung himself towards the opposite extreme. While appearing to float aimlessly in a mist of many colours and no distinct outline, he was really high above the flight of other minds, at an altitude whence he descried, like an eagle, the fields of future conflict.

CHAPTER XXIII

RETREAT AND SURRENDER

THE appearance of "The Excursion" drew forth many elaborate and able reviews, several of which have considerable value in literary history because they go deep into general questions with which criticism has always been concerned. One of the reviewers was William Hazlitt, in *The Examiner* for August 21 and 28 and October 2, 1814. His judgment of the poem as a whole and of Wordsworth's genius was highly favourable, though he professed to think the poet had exaggerated the goodness and charm of country life, and used subjects that were too "low." He boldly rebukes Wordsworth for his cold renunciation of Revolutionary hopes. Yet there is no better statement of Wordsworth's fundamental æsthetic principle than these words of Hazlitt: "He only sympathizes with those forms of feeling which mingle at once with his own identity or the stream of general humanity. To him the great and the small are the same; the near and the remote; what happens and what only is. The common and the permanent, like the Platonic ideas, are his only realities."

Jeffrey's article, in *The Edinburgh Review* for November, 1814, began brutally, "This will never do," a sentence which was caught up by the public and seriously hindered the sale of the poem. His objection to the "lowness" of the characters was what might have been expected from him because he still disapproved of Wordsworth on the ground—then already a mistaken ground—that he was a teacher of subversive political doctrine. He failed to see that the poem expressed a modification, almost a recantation, of Wordsworth's earlier views. He also pretended to find the speculative passages incomprehensible, though with

very slight trouble he might have seen that their purpose was to give poetic form to the Kantian ethics, psychology, and metaphysics, as is marvellously illustrated in the following lines:

> Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
> And passions hold a fluctuating seat:
> But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
> And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
> Duty exists;—immutably survive,
> For our support, the measures and the forms,
> Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
> Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.

Charles Lamb, in *The Quarterly Review*, criticized the poem much more favourably. He formulates one of its chief purposes in the following sentence: "The general tendency of the argument (which we might almost affirm to be the leading moral of the poem) is to abate the pride of the calculating understanding and to reinstate the *imagination* and the *affections* in those seats from which modern philosophy has laboured but too successfully to expel them."

Wordsworth was in after years extremely sensitive to the charge that his early poetry had a pantheistic tendency (as was certainly the case).

One of the first traces of this objection is found in a long article on "The Excursion" by James Montgomery, in *The Eclectic Review* for January, 1815. He is sorry, for Wordsworth's own sake and for the thousands in future generations who may be his readers, that he has not dealt more with Sin and Redemption through the Blood of Christ. If only the poem contained "an honest exposition of the Christian Faith," it would be "the most perfect strain of moral poetry in the English, or perhaps in any language."

Commenting on this article, Crabb Robinson wrote in his diary, January 5, 1815, that it raised "a doubt as to the religious character of the poem. It is insinuated that Nature is a sort of God throughout, and, consistently with the Calvinistic orthodoxy of the reviewer, the lamentable error of representing a love of Nature as

a sort of purifying state of mind, and the study of Nature as a sanctifying process, is emphatically pointed out."*

Montgomery's strictures are not at all applicable to "The Excursion," though they would have been quite apt if made in reference to "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," "Lines Written in Early Spring," "To my Sister," "Expostulation and Reply," "The Tables Turned," "Peter Bell," and many passages in "The Prelude," especially in the earliest version, all of which are distinctly pantheistic or naturalistic.

Two handsomely printed volumes, with two execrable frontispieces, representing pictures by Sir George Beaumont, appeared in March, 1815, with the title "Poems by William Wordsworth, including Lyrical Ballads and the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author, with additional poems, a new preface, and a supplementary essay." Longman was the publisher, and the book was dedicated to Sir George Beaumont. The supplementary essay is printed at the end of Volume One, and the great Preface to "Lyrical Ballads" is stuffed in, as if to fill space, at the end of Volume Two. The new preface cannot compare in weight of matter or eloquence of style with the old one. Here is found his famous distinction between Fancy and Imagination, a distinction not imperceptible in a general way to any careful observer. He brusquely reverses the older definitions, based, it is true, on etymology rather than usage, and insists that Fancy is the visualizing faculty, and Imagination the faculty whereby values are imputed to objects to which they do not, in fact, belong. He maintains, with the violence of one who is defending a statement he knows cannot be proved, that there is a tremendous difference in kind between Imagination and Fancy. Poor Fancy comes by many a hard knock, while her sublime sister

* Robinson had already, on December 19, reported a conversation with Flaxman on the subject of a supposed piece of impiety in the fragment prefixed to "The Excursion": "Flaxman took umbrage at some mystical expressions in the fragment in the Preface, in which Wordsworth talks of *seeing Jehovah unalarmed*. 'If my brother had written that,' said Flaxman, 'I should say, Burn it.'"

receives all the poet's homage; yet in the end he fails to prove that there is more than a difference of intensity and seriousness between them.

That Wordsworth set great store by the system of classification observed in these volumes is evident from his having clung to it in subsequent editions. It is supposed to carry the reader's mind over the whole of life, from childhood to the grave, and beyond. But another method conflicts with this, for some of the poems are grouped according to the faculties of the mind to which their creation was chiefly attributed, and both plans are abandoned in order to permit the introduction of poems on the naming of places, sonnets dedicated to liberty and—sonnets! The scheme was thrust upon Wordsworth by some tricksy sprite for his undoing. It has nothing to recommend it, and has been wisely dropped by some editors in favour of a chronological order. His divisions, however, are as follows: Volume One contains Poems referring to the period of Childhood, Juvenile Pieces, Poems founded on the Affections, Poems of the Fancy, and Poems of the Imagination; Volume Two contains Poems of the Imagination (continued), Poems proceeding from Sentiment and Reflection, Miscellaneous Sonnets, Sonnets dedicated to Liberty (in two parts: I., those published in 1807; and II., from the year 1807 to 1813), Poems on the Naming of Places, Inscriptions, Poems referring to the Period of Old Age, Epitaphs and Elegiac Poems, and the Ode on Intimations, etc. In the table of contents are given the dates of composition and of first publication. Of "An Evening Walk," "Descriptive Sketches," and "The Female Vagrant," only extracts are reprinted, these fragments giving a very imperfect idea of the originals.

Many textual changes were made in subsequent editions, but the two volumes of 1815, together with "The Excursion," set Wordsworth fairly before the world. Here was enough poetry of the highest order to insure immortality, and he knew it. He was aware also of the ample justice done him by several of the greatest

critics in Britain—by Coleridge, the greatest of all, and Lamb, the pioneer of fame. Even carping judges like Hazlitt appreciated his merits. De Quincey, whose own style was certain to keep his name alive, was his disciple. Southey proclaimed him the first of living poets. The sound mind of Walter Scott had pronounced in his favour. He had a fairly wide and growing circle of readers. Why should he have cared whether the larger public came round to him a few years sooner or later? This is the question that rises as we read the Essay supplementary to the Preface.

His theme at the beginning of this extraordinary production is the hostility of his "Adversaries," whom he assails in terms more violent than any that had ever been applied to himself. After this unpleasing display of temper, he begins a wonderful Defence of Poetry, worthy of all praise.

He wishes there were a better word than "taste" for expressing the quality of appreciative judgment, "Taste" originally signifying only a passive receiving of impressions, whereas there is something active, aggressive, and dynamic in that function of the mind when properly exerted. He quotes a remark long since made to him by Coleridge, "that every Author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed." Even ancient authors, of acknowledged authority, "have to call forth and communicate *power*" in their readers before they can be enjoyed; and "this service, in a still greater degree, falls upon an original Writer, at his first appearance in the world." This is Wordsworth's defence of his own course. "Of genius the only proof is, the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before; of genius, in the fine arts, the only infallible sign is the widening of the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour, and benefit, of human nature."

This essay, in its three parts, first its attack upon uninspired and unsympathetic criticism, secondly its original review of English poetry since the Renaissance,

and thirdly its vindication of the claims of originality in poetry, is one of the most important polemical documents in support of the Romantic Movement. Its vigour and eloquence are more commendable than its temper.

Of previously unpublished poems the edition of 1815 does not contain many. Except the thirty-two fresh Sonnets dedicated to Liberty, the new pieces would not have been enough to fill a very slender volume, and, of these, only "Laodamia" bears witness to any broadening of sympathy or advance in technique. To glance at the table of contents, with the dates of the poems appended, is to be startled with the conviction that somewhere between 1807 and 1815 the poet's development had been arrested. This conviction is strengthened when we contrast the natural fire of the twenty-six political sonnets published in 1807 and the bigness of their subjects with the artificial heat and far-fetched topics of the thirty-two new ones. Notwithstanding Charles Lamb's cordial approval of "Yarrow Visited," it is not worthy of a place beside its tender, wistful, magical predecessor, with which it compares even less favourably than broad noon to dewy, expectant dawn. Sonnets on the poet's domestic affairs, translations from Michael Angelo and Chiabrera, inscriptions for urns and seats in Sir George Beaumont's grounds, verses on one of Sir George's paintings, two or three other sonnets, and "The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale," which is little more than a parody on "The Reverie of Poor Susan," make up the rest of the novelties.

Early in May, 1815, the poet and Mrs. Wordsworth, accompanied by Sara Hutchinson, went to London. There were business difficulties with Richard Wordsworth, whose death, without his having signed certain papers, would have deprived Dorothy of her small patrimony. There was also a natural desire to see how the recent publications were being received. Coleridge was living now at Calne, near Bristol. Robinson and the Lambs welcomed the visitors with joy. The former wrote in his Diary on May 7:

"On returning from a walk to Shooter's Hill, I found a card from Wordsworth, and running to Lamb's I found Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth there. After sitting half an hour with them, I accompanied them to their lodgings, near Cavendish Square. Mrs. Wordsworth appears to be a mild and amiable woman, not so lively or animated as Miss Wordsworth, but, like her, devoted to the poet."

On June 15 Robinson spent the forenoon with Wordsworth, who spoke of having called on Leigh Hunt, and of having heard from him about an article of Hazlitt's in the last Sunday's *Examiner*. Hazlitt had accused Southey and Wordsworth of apostasy from their old political faith. Hunt disclaimed the article. The attack occurs in a paragraph on Milton's consistency; *he* had not written paltry sonnets on the "Royal fortitude," like the sonnet to the king "in the Last Edition of the Works of a modern Poet." This was an allusion to Wordsworth's sonnet on King George, composed in 1813 and published in 1815. The critic had also hinted that Wordsworth had been guided by base motives in omitting from his collection "The Female Vagrant," his old poem on the miseries inflicted on the poor by war. We have here the germ of that tradition upon which Browning's "Lost Leader" was more or less consciously founded, for Browning admitted that he had the older poet's defection vaguely in mind, at least.

On June 18 Robinson breakfasted at Wordsworth's and stayed till two o'clock, B. R. Haydon, the painter, being present. He makes no further mention of the poet in London, at this time, and by the 28th the latter is in the north country once more, rejoicing in the news of Waterloo, with awe and sorrow for the fallen.

"The White Doe of Rylstone, or The Fate of The Nortons," was published by Longman in May, 1815, during its author's stay in London. It appeared in a handsome quarto. Facing the title-page is an engraving of a painting by Sir George Beaumont, which represents a scene in the poem. There are a brief Advertisement, as reprinted in subsequent editions, the sonnet begin-

ning "Weak is the will of Man, his judgment blind," a quotation from Lord Bacon, and a poetical epistle to Mrs. Wordsworth, dated Rydal Mount, April 20, 1815. The passage from Bacon is to the effect that "Man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith which human Nature in itself could not obtain," just as a dog, strengthened in heart by reliance upon a man, receives a confidence above its own natural power. This is a singularly apt condensation of the moral of the tale. Then follows the poem itself, with the verses on "The Force of Prayer, or The Founding of Bolton Priory," and the Notes.

Many considerations demanded that after the battle of Waterloo Wordsworth should devote his powers to stemming the tide of reaction. A people not naturally lustful for military glory had turned aside from peaceful pursuits to take part in a twenty years' war, and had been victorious. The nation was now absolutely safe from foreign danger. It had nothing further to gain from keeping up a great armament or fostering a warlike spirit. On the contrary, its industries being prostrate, its debt enormous, its taxation high and ill-apportioned, its working class impoverished and starving, its landowners and capitalists in possession of undue advantage, its schools, colleges, scientific societies, and charities unsettled, what it needed was internal reform. Public law, as must always be the case in time of war, had been tampered with by the authorities. The liberties of the people had been infringed. The progress of democracy had been checked. It seemed as if political and social idealists had been rebuked by some divine voice, and to the thunder of destiny meaner tongues did not fail to add their taunting chorus. It was a second Restoration, without the personal corruption and the public glitter.

Wordsworth, as we have had abundant opportunity to observe, deemed himself, and hitherto justly deemed himself, the Milton of his age. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that his chief interest was political. The peculiarities of his art are due to political principles,

or at least to a world-view of which a certain theory of human values is an essential element. In the present crisis it was his duty to speak on behalf of the highest national good, having first applied his unrivalled powers of sympathetic analysis to the discovery of that wherein this good consisted. And he did speak. We should be doing him a grave injustice by assuming that he did not think before he spoke; but his study of the situation was as vain as the voice was feeble. He quite failed to see where the real danger lay, and he trembled at phantoms. He rejoiced with the rejoicing multitude, when humble searching of heart would have better become a wise man. In fact, he was at this point and for the rest of his life no seer; the vision of England's destiny was denied to him; henceforth he seldom made a political prediction which time has verified, or which shows him to have appreciated the forces that were moulding the future.

We have already seen how numerous and subtle were the processes of decline in moral vigour which had been going on in Wordsworth's character for twelve or fourteen years. The result is distressingly apparent in the poems he wrote to celebrate the fall of Napoleon. He composed in 1816 no less than four odes, two shorter pieces in the manner of the ode, and five sonnets, on this subject. It was a legitimate subject for English poetry at that time, but not for boastful pæans.

The feeling displayed in Wordsworth's verses is intemperate, inhuman, and irreligious. He assumes that the Almighty is on England's side. We forgive the vanquished when they console themselves with such faith, but of the victor we are inclined to ask, "What would be your opinion if you were beaten?" As if to be avenged for her betrayal in the region of morals, Truth refused to show herself even in the sphere of art, and these verses are among the least natural that can be found in the whole range of English literature. They are a denial of all those principles of poetic diction the establishment of which is an honour to Wordsworth's insight and their maintenance a credit to his courage.

The keynote of artificiality is struck in the first words of the "Thanksgiving Ode," "Hail, orient Conqueror of gloomy Night!" We have "Pierian Sisters," "sage Mnemosyne," the "Olympian summit," a hierarchy of angels and seraphs, and much besides of the old repertory which men are now agreed to call pre-Wordsworthian. Many lines which would have been appropriate enough in Spenser's days or Milton's or Dryden's savour of affectation when found in the pages of Wordsworth. Some of the stanzas, owing to their relationship to poetry of an older date and their remoteness from the language of the author's own time, read like splendid school exercises. This is not to say that there are not one or two fine things, even in a poem which claims the Spirit of Wisdom, Love, and Progress as a tribal Deity. It is no excuse to reply that the ancient Jews made the same assertion. In a stanza which ends with the banal blasphemy,

> Thy presence turns the scale of doubtful fight,
> Tremendous God of battles, Lord of Hosts!

we find such lively images as these:

> He springs the hushed Volcano's mine,
> He puts the Earthquake on her still design.

But on the whole we may say that the time was already past when a great poet, writing on War, could, without defalcation of genius, express merely or mainly a sense of pride and joy. The feelings of compunction, perplexity, and horror, which Wordsworth and Coleridge manifested in their earlier references to the subject, are much more in accord with the modern conscience.

In his preface to his "Thanksgiving Ode," Wordsworth showed, indeed, that he had been troubled with scruples. He met an imagined rebuke with a prediction which proved false, when he wrote, in reference to the distresses of the poor: "If the author has given way to exultation, unchecked by these distresses, it might be sufficient to protect him from a charge of insensibility, should he state his own belief that these sufferings will

be transitory." Comforting himself with this easy assumption, which the history of the next thirty years in England was to deny, he goes on to advocate the maintenance of a large army, and especially of schools for instruction in military science.

This poem, with several others of the same character, was published by Longman in 1816, under the following title: "Thanksgiving Ode, January 18, 1816, with other Short Pieces, chiefly relating to recent public events, by William Wordsworth." The Advertisement, or preface, is dated March 18, 1816. The little octavo volume also contains the "Ode composed in January, 1816," eight sonnets, verses "In Recollection of the Expedition of the French into Russia" ("Humanity delighting to behold"), the ode "Who rises on the Banks of Seine," and "Elegiac Verses" (afterwards named "Invocation to the Earth"). Almost all these pieces were composed in February. The chill of winter remains in them to this day.

In April, 1816, Longman printed for Wordsworth "A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns, occasioned by an intended republication of the Account of the Life of Burns, by Dr. Currie; and of the Selection made by him from his Letters." It is a pamphlet of thirty-seven pages, in the form of a letter addressed to James Gray, Esq., of Edinburgh, dated January, 1816, and in fact was originally a private communication, although the possibility of its being made public was in the writer's mind from the first. He hoped to dissuade Gilbert Burns from republishing Dr. Currie's "Life" of his brother, and to encourage him to write a short sketch himself instead. In expressing his indignation and sorrow at the defamation of Burns's character in Dr. Currie's indiscreet revelations and puritanical comments, he breaks into a strain of eloquence, which is simpler and more touching than anything else in his prose works. By the delicacy and yet the manly frankness of all his references to Burns's failings, by his exquisitely chosen terms of praise for Burns's genius and the noble elements of his character, by avoiding the use of

those trite and blundering excuses which are an insult to Burns's memory, he shows in every line how he reverenced his brother poet.

Strange to say, some of the Scotch were displeased that an English author should have praised their great poet. A lively controversy arose, of which a specimen from *Blackwood's Magazine* for November, 1817, exhibits the notion of Wordsworth then held by many persons. He is spoken of as "a retired, pensive, egotistical *collector of stamps*, one who has no notion of that merry, hearty life that Burns delighted in."

"How," he exclaims, "can a melancholy, sighing, half-parson sort of gentleman, who lives in a small circle of old maids and sonneteers, and drinks tea now and then with the solemn Laureate, have any sympathy with the free and jolly dispositions of one who spent his evenings in drinking whisky punch at mason lodges with Matthew Henderson and David Lapraik?"

The strange poem "Dion" was written in 1816. It is not at all in any "manner" shown elsewhere by Wordsworth, and would probably never have been recognized as his if it had been published anonymously. It does not, like "Laodamia," recall the spirit of Greek religion or the Greek conception of beauty. Rather does it remind one of the noble and austere English poets who, we know, were his favourite reading—of Drayton and Daniel and Marvell. He found his subject in Plutarch, but his language is like theirs, less warm and sensuous than Milton's, harder to the ear than Spenser's, and in no wise that of even the most exalted "common" speech. There are at least two serious organic faults in the poem: Dion's crime is not clearly related or sufficiently emphasized; and the introduction of his vision, while necessarily sudden, makes too abrupt a transition from the general to the specific. That Wordsworth at this time, when he elsewhere manifests no misgivings as to the righteousness of the military life in itself, should have written this negative comment on his "Character of the Happy Warrior," proves that his

principles were still not quite set in their new mould. Perhaps this moral difficulty was one cause of the obscurity that remains in this poem notwithstanding his extremely careful revision of the manuscript and the printed editions. Its haunting mystery is due less to its verbal darkness than to its troubled moral atmosphere. The essence of the whole poem is in the last three lines, which may be taken as Wordsworth's final comment on the behaviour of those enthusiasts of the Revolution who committed acts of violence on the principle that the end justified the means:

> Him only pleasure leads and peace attends,
> Him, only him, the shield of Jove defends,
> Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends.

We learn from Robinson's Diary, May 28, 1816, that Godwin, arch disturber of the complacent, had lately spent a night at Wordsworth's house, and seemed to have left him "with feelings of strong political difference." "It was this alone, I believe," he adds, "which kept them aloof from each other." Robinson himself, that comfortable and accommodating soul, says, "I have learned to bear with the intolerance of others when I understand it." He too had rejoiced in the overthrow of Napoleon, because he believed him to be an enemy of liberty, but now he perceived that with the restoration of the old system, the old cares and anxieties had revived also.

"I am sorry," he writes, "that Wordsworth cannot change with the times. He ought, I think, now to exhort our Government to economy, and to represent the dangers of a thoughtless return to all that was in existence twenty-five years ago. Of the integrity of Wordsworth I have no doubt, and of his genius I have an unbounded admiration, but I doubt the discretion and wisdom of his latest political writings."

Robinson mentions that Wordsworth, his wife, and Miss Hutchinson were in London in December, 1817. He met them at a dinner at which Charles Lamb and

Coleridge and his son Hartley were present. The amiable and indefatigable lion-hunter called on them at the Rev. Dr. Christopher Wordsworth's, in Lambeth, and "spent a couple of hours with them very agreeably." The poet had brought manuscripts of new poems with him and was inclined to print one or two small volumes. On December 30, Robinson spent the evening at Lamb's, where he "found a large party collected round the two poets, but Coleridge had the larger number." Hazlitt was not alone in charging Wordsworth with deserting the principles of his younger days, and doubtless there was much controversy on this topic. The attitude of Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth was the more noticeable because of its contrast with the outspoken radicalism of Byron and Shelley. On November 6, Robinson had written:

"I went to Godwin's. Mr. Shelley was there. His youth, and a resemblance to Southey, particularly in his voice, raised a pleasing impression, which was not altogether destroyed by his conversation, though it is vehement, and arrogant, and intolerant. He was very abusive towards Southey, whom he spoke of as having sold himself to the Court. And this he maintained with the usual party slang. His pension and his Laureateship, his early zeal and his recent virulence, are the proofs of gross corruption. On every topic but that of violent party feeling, the friends of Southey are under no difficulty in defending him. Shelley spoke of Wordsworth with less bitterness, but with an insinuation of his insincerity."

It was probably much more than an insinuation, for Shelley had not hesitated, in a sonnet "To Wordsworth," published with "Alastor," in 1816, to make the charge in plain terms. In his journals for 1814 and 1815, he recorded the fact that he had read "The Excursion." Whether the disapproval expressed in the sonnet was due to anything he found in that poem, or merely to the talk against Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey in Leigh Hunt's circle, can only be guessed. The sonnet is as follows:

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar;
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

On December 28, 1817, the artist Haydon gave a dinner, to which, as Keats wished to know Wordsworth, both the poets were invited, besides Charles Lamb and Monkhouse, a kinsman of Mrs. Wordsworth. After dinner other friends came in, and probably it was as gay an evening as Wordsworth ever spent. The following extracts are from Haydon's account:

"On December 28th the immortal dinner came off in my painting room, with Jerusalem* towering up above us as a background. Wordsworth was in fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to,—on Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty; and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. 'Now,' said Lamb, 'you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?' We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. 'Well,' said Lamb, 'here's Voltaire—the Messiah of the French nation, and a very proper one too.' . . . In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth, and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction.

* Haydon's picture of Christ's Entrance into Jerusalem. Wordsworth and Keats had sat as models for minor figures in this large painting. Hazlitt, Voltaire, and Sir Isaac Newton were also represented. The painting is now in the Art Museum, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

WORDSWORTH IN 1820

Detail from Haydon's "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem." The figure in the centre is Wordsworth. Immediately above him is Keats. Behind Wordsworth are Voltaire and Newton.

He told me he was a comptroller of stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come."

After telling of the unseemly and rather cruel sport they made of this poor fellow, who was out of his element, Haydon continues:

"It was indeed an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats's eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in my life I never passed a more delightful time. All our fun was within bounds. Not a word passed that an apostle might not have listened to. It was a night worthy of the Elizabethan age, and my solemn Jerusalem flashing up by the flame of the fire, with Christ hanging over us like a vision, all made up a picture which will long glow upon

that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude."

The commissioner of stamps was named Kingston. One would suppose from Haydon's gossiping account that poets were quite out of this man's line. But he is mentioned more than once in Keats's letters, and appears to have belonged to the coterie of wits which included the authors of "Rejected Addresses." Though in the distribution of stamps he was no doubt a very important person, Keats called him a "thing." In spite of its unhappy beginning, Wordsworth and Kingston kept up their acquaintance, for Keats says, in a letter of January 5, 1818: "On Saturday I called on Wordsworth before he went to Kingston's, and was surprised to find him with a stiff collar. I saw his spouse, and I think his daughter." Dilke, in his annotated copy of Lord Houghton's "Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats," says: "When Keats first called on Wordsworth he was kept waiting for a long time, and when Wordsworth entered he was in full flower; knee-breeches, silk stockings, etc., and in a great hurry as he

was going to dine with one of the Commissioners of Stamps."

By far the most notable event in 1817, as far as Wordsworth is concerned, was the publication of Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria." This occurred about March. The book, as a whole, is an incomplete medley of several compositions, but its outstanding feature, and that which gives it a unique place among Coleridge's prose works, is the famous discussion of Wordsworth's poems and their underlying principles. Not only is it an impassioned and most eloquent example of English criticism, but there never has been a more subtle, or, I venture to say, a more philosophical treatise on poetry. Nor in the annals of literature is there record of one great author doing more to establish the fame of another, than Coleridge here did to establish Wordsworth's fame; for the profit of all the depth, fineness, and beauty of this treatise falls at Wordsworth's feet. He is the example cited; he is the beneficiary of the interest created. In writing as he did, Coleridge effaced himself, forgot that he too was a poet, refused to claim even his share of the credit for plans and methods which he and Wordsworth had worked out together. Yet one looks in vain through Wordsworth's letters and the many conversations with him that are on record, for any sign that he appreciated either the tribute paid to his genius or the intrinsic merit of Coleridge's performance. Even when Hazlitt, in *The Edinburgh Review* for August, 1817, made a fierce attack upon the book, and *Blackwood's Magazine* for October followed with another equally hostile and more atrociously personal, Wordsworth, so far as is known, gave no sign.

A word dropped by Dorothy, on another subject, shows perhaps that her brother did not quite relish the "Biographia Literaria." Writing to Mrs. Clarkson on April 13, in reference to Coleridge's defence of Southey against the charge of apostasy, she says: "Coleridge, for instance, has taken up the cudgels; and of injudicious defenders he is surely the master leader. . . . He does

nothing in simplicity, and his praise is to me quite disgusting—his praise of the 'man' Southey in contradistinction to the 'boy' who wrote 'Wat Tyler.'"

We might indulge the hope that this unpleasant passage was only an expression of temporary petulance were it not for the following passage in Coleridge's letter of December 2, 1818, to Thomas Allsop:

"I have loved with enthusiastic self-oblivion those who have been so well pleased that I should, year after year, flow with a hundred nameless rills into *their* main stream, that they could find nothing but cold praise and effective discouragement of every attempt of mine to roll onward in a distinct current of my own; who *admitted* that the 'Ancient Mariner,' the 'Christabel,' the 'Remorse,' and some pages of *The Friend* were not without merit, but were abundantly anxious to acquit their judgments of any blindness to the very numerous defects. Yet they *knew* that to *praise*, as mere praise, I was characteristically, almost constitutionally, indifferent. In sympathy alone I found at once nourishment and stimulus; and for sympathy *alone* did my heart crave. They knew, too, how long and faithfully I had acted on the maxim never to admit the *faults* of a work of genius to those who denied or were incapable of feeling and understanding the *beauties*; not from wilful partiality, but as well knowing that in *saying* truth I should, to such critics, convey falsehood. If in one instance, in my literary life, I have appeared to deviate from this rule, first, it was not till the fame of the writer (which I had been for fourteen years successively toiling like a second Ali to build up) had been established; and, secondly, and chiefly with the purpose and, I may safely add, with the effect of rescuing the necessary task from malignant defamers, and in order to set forth the excellences and the trifling proportion which the defects bore to the excellences."

Those who think of Wordsworth only as a serene intelligence, indulging himself, aloof from worldly cares, in the enjoyment of "nature" and the contemplation of ideals, will be relieved, or shocked, according to their notion of propriety, by discovering that for at least one whole year, 1818, he was engaged in practical

politics. Moreover, some of the work he performed was rather elementary and, to a modern judgment, reprehensible—namely, manipulating the local franchise so as to increase his party's vote. He served, in fact, as Lord Lonsdale's lieutenant, which the following extracts from letters will show. The first is to his lordship, under date of February 18:

"I wish much for your opinion as to the propriety of precautionary measures in augmenting the numbers of trustworthy freeholders. An offer has been made to me of an estate which would divide into *twelve* small freeholds; and, with your Lordship's sanction, I would purchase it, being able to reckon on as many persons—gentlemen, my friends, and relations—who could be depended upon. If it be found that your adversaries adopt the plan of increasing the numbers in their interest, it will be necessary to keep pace with them, and I don't think that the matter can be safely left to casualties."

This is what would be termed nowadays "pernicious activity" in an office-holder. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how the "plan" differs from a proposal to buy votes. The familiar defence is made—namely, that the other side is busy too, and that the eleven new votes would be of the "right kind." Whether with the earl's money or his own, we are not told, he carried out his scheme in part, and writes to a correspondent on December 8:

"Our opponents are very active in procuring freeholds, so much so that we must exert ourselves with the view of preserving the balance. This necessity is much to be regretted,—but it to me is so obvious that I purchased the other day a freehold estate in Langdale, which will divide into seven parts. Of these five are already disposed of, one to Mr. Gee, and the other four to my own relations."

Again he says:

"What else but the stability and might of a large estate, with proportional influence in the House of Commons, can counterbalance the democratic activity of the wealthy, commercial, and manufacturing dis-

tricts? It appears to a superficial observer, warm from contemplating the theory of the Constitution, that the political power of the great landholders ought, by every true lover of his country, to be strenuously resisted; but I would ask a well-intentioned native of Westmorland or Cumberland, who had fallen into this mistake, if he could point to any arrangement by which Jacobinism can be frustrated except by the existence of large estates continued from generation to generation in particular families and parliamentary power in proportion."

The house of Lowther had long held both seats in Parliament for the county of Westmorland. The idea of contesting them had scarcely entered anybody's head. The Tory candidate in 1818 was William Lowther, eldest son of Wordsworth's patron, the second Earl of Lonsdale. To the disgust and scandal of the gentry, the magistracy, and the clergy of that very conservative region, the Whigs set up Henry Brougham, most versatile of politicians, and a man wholly unmindful of other people's prejudices. He had already made a name for himself in the House of Commons, and had been charged, in the recent session, with advocating freedom of suffrage for all payers of direct taxes, and Annual Parliaments. He was, therefore, a dangerous man. Wordsworth's pen was engaged to overthrow this champion of pernicious doctrine. Gratitude towards the Lowther family and a sense of dependence upon persons so powerful to affect his well-being and that of his children, together with knowledge that Brougham had for many years been one of the leading spirits in *The Edinburgh Review*, may have entered into Wordsworth's motives. But the principles he expressed were, of course, his own, acquired by severe thinking and held in a grip of iron. It was his original intention to contribute a series of letters to the Kendal *Chronicle*, and he did, indeed, have one letter printed in that newspaper. Another appeared in the Carlisle *Patriot*. Dissatisfied with this mode of publication, he put forth, at Kendal, a pamphlet of seventy-eight pages entitled "Two Addresses to the Freeholders of West-

morland." What had appeared in the *Chronicle* and the *Patriot* was here repeated and developed.

Stripped of all temporary and local accidents, his argument is that of those, everywhere and in all times, who defend the "machine," the "boss," and "things as they are" in politics. The resemblance deepens when he breaks into an invective against Reformers: "The independence which they boast of despises habit and time-honoured forms of subordination; it consists in breaking old ties upon new temptations; in casting off the modest garb of private obligation to strut about in the glittering armour of public virtue; in sacrificing, with jacobinical infatuation, the near to the remote, and preferring to what has been known and tried, that which has no distinct existence, even in imagination; in renouncing, with voluble tongue and vain heart, everything intricate in motive and mixed in quality; in a downright passion for love of absolute, unapproachable patriotism!" Familiar, too, is the depreciation of talent in politics: "Talent," this invective continues, "is apt to generate presumption and self-confidence; and no qualities are so necessary, in a Legislator, as the opposites of these—which, if they do not imply the existence of sagacity, are the best substitutes for it—whether they produce, in the general disposition of the mind, an humble reliance on the wisdom of our Forefathers, and a sedate yielding to the pressure of existing things, or carry the thoughts still higher, to religious trust in a superintending Providence, by whose permission laws are ordained and customs established, for other purposes than to be perpetually found fault with." It is to be apprehended that if Wordsworth's detractors had noticed that curious phrase, "a sedate yielding to the pressure of existing things," they would have given it wider currency than the limits of Westmorland.

Besides these crudities of prejudice and party feeling, two strong lines of conviction run through the addresses. They have great significance in a study of Wordsworth's life. The two lines are parallel, though one was generated by the other. He believes that the Revo-

lutionary doctrines have been proved false, and that England, if she yields an inch to the urgency of reformers, will be letting in "*the Vanguard of a Ferocious Revolution.*"

Relentless to his own past, he exclaims: "Remember what England might have been with an Administration countenancing French Doctrines at the dawn of the French Revolution, and suffering them, as it advanced, to be sown with every wind that came across the Channel!" Does he forget his own plea that the French Revolution would not have turned into despotism had France been free from the terror of invasion?

One of the ground-principles of the Revolution was that persons, not property, should be the first concern of government. This principle Wordsworth in his youth accepted, but now repudiates. In support of his present view he makes the following summary of civil history, which is far more perverse and contrary to fact than any dogmatic claim ever put forth by Rousseau: "Knowing that there could be no *absolute* guarantee for integrity, and that there was no *certain* test of discretion and knowledge, for bodies of men, the prudence of former times turned to the best substitute human nature would admit of, and civil society furnished. This was property." On this ground he appeals to his readers to support the Lowther candidate.

Keats passed through Rydal in June, on his joyous northern tour, and called on Wordsworth, who was not at home. Lord Houghton says: "His disappointment at missing Wordsworth was very great, and he hardly concealed his vexation when he found that he owed the privation to the interest which the elder poet was taking in the general Election. This annoyance would perhaps have been diminished if the two poets had happened to be on the same side in politics, but, as it was, no views and objects could be more opposed." Keats respected Wordsworth's genius. His first reference to him is in the sonnet, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning," written in 1816. And writing of

this to Haydon, November 20, 1816, he says: "The Idea of your sending it to Wordsworth put me out of breath—you know with what Reverence I would send my well-wishes to him." It was in reviewing Keats's "Poems," in *The Examiner*, that Leigh Hunt declared Wordsworth "the successor of the true and abundant poets of the older time." On January 10, 1818, Keats writes: "I have seen Wordsworth frequently. Dined with him last Monday." On January 23, he says: "I have seen a great deal of Wordsworth." This is the letter in which he tells of receiving a lock of Milton's hair from Hunt. The latter in one of his sonnets inspired by this occasion, alludes unmistakably to Wordsworth, when he says:

> I'll wear it, but as my inherited due,
> (For there is one, whom had he kept his art
> For Freedom still, nor left her for the crew
> Of lucky slaves in his misgiving heart,
> I would have begged thy leave to give it to)
> Yet not without some claims, though far apart.

It is quite evident from the tone of Keats's reference to Wordsworth that he did not reverence his character, partly for the reason implied in Hunt's lines, partly because he thought him egotistical.

For example, writing to his brothers, February 21, 1818, he says: "I am sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression wherever he visited in town by his egotism, vanity, and bigotry. Yet he is a great poet if not a philosopher."

It was, we may be sure, in a gay, vivacious mood, and with no intention of depreciating Wordsworth, that Keats had written to Reynolds, in February:

"It may be said that we ought to read our contemporaries, that Wordsworth, etc., should have their due from us. But, for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist? Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false

coinage, and deceives himself. Many a man can travel to the very bourne of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his half-seeing. Sancho will invent a journey heavenward as well as anybody. We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us, and, if we do not agree, seems to put its hand into its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle or amaze it with itself, but with its subject."

He continues in this high-flying style for some space, at Wordsworth's expense, but his more sober judgment rules in another letter to Reynolds, of May 3, in which he compares Wordsworth with Milton. In explaining the dark passages of life, and "in thinking into the human heart," he finds Wordsworth superior. Among the books in the Rydal Mount library was a copy of Keats's "Poems," 1817, with the words "To W. Wordsworth, with the Author's sincere reverence," written on the title-page.

To have done with Keats's references to Wordsworth, which nearly all centre about this time, we have only to note that in some doggerel verses called "The Gadfly," in which one of the Lowthers is ridiculed, verses written July 17 and sent to his brother Tom, Wordsworth's name occurs, and once he speaks of "the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime." Young as he was, Keats's eye for character was keen. He formed his opinions with manly independence. One is at first disposed to give weight to his high estimate of Wordsworth's poetry and deny it to the rather disparaging view he took of his character, but everyone who has carefully read Keats's letters must perceive that the purity of his heart and the freshness and vigour of his intellect made him a man whose moral judgments were exceptionally sound. He rarely passed censure on anyone.

Shelley's condemnation, uttered at about the same time, need not be taken so seriously. He did not know Wordsworth, and his political bias was stronger even than Keats's. He wrote:

"The news of the result of the elections, especially that of the metropolis, is highly inspiring. I received a letter, of two days' later date, with yours, which announced the unfortunate termination of that of Westmorland. I wish you had sent me some of the overflowing villainy of those apostates: What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet! I can compare him with no one but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of lyric poets."

Passing gladly from Wordsworth's adventures in the political field, which show to what extremity of opinion and intemperance of language a high-strung novice may be wrought, we turn for relief to his poems of that year, 1818. But here disappointment awaits us, and we are reminded of the mysterious connection which we have already more than once remarked between his views of society and the quality of his verse. So long as he trusted human nature and was concerned for men as men, so long as his outlook was hopeful, catholic, and democratic, his poetry retained its touching simplicity and that reverent realism from which the mind could spring to infinite spiritual heights. I am far from affirming that in an aristocratic theory of history collateral support for a great poet's labours might not be found. But the fact is that in Wordsworth's case, poetic genius failed in curiously exact proportion as he passed from a liberal to a narrow estimate of human rights. Lord Morley's remark that "Wordsworth, who clung fervently to the historic foundations of society as it stands, was wholly indifferent to history," seems to me quite misleading. I can think of no poet who was more attentive to history and more agitated by what he deemed its lessons. Not the shows, the colour, the sentiments of history, but its effect on human welfare, interested him. To employ a simple, though improper, analysis, we might say that he viewed history as a moralist rather than as an artist. Of the period in his life which we have now reached, and all that follows, Lord Morley's other statement is true,—Wordsworth

"clung fervently to the foundations of society" as it stood; but of the earlier and more glorious and productive period, the very contrary must be said.

The poems, so far as is known, which Wordsworth wrote in 1818 are "The Pilgrim's Dream, or the Star and the Glow-worm," five Inscriptions supposed to be found in and near a Hermit's Cell, and the "Evening Voluntary, composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty." In his earlier and better period, those poems which were not merely the spontaneous utterance of joyous emotion were composed through one of two processes. Sometimes a simple, natural event or object suddenly detached itself in his mind from its surroundings and appealed to him through that constant, universal, and inherent interestingness of which the world is full. When the beauty or the pathos of the thing itself was obvious, he was content merely to let nature be her own interpreter. For example, he drew no moral from "Alice Fell." When a moral was inferred, as in the last stanza of "Simon Lee":

> I've heard of hearts unkind, good deeds
> With coldness still returning;
> Alas! the gratitude of men
> Hath oftener left me mourning,

it is generally as simple and natural as the instance which suggested it, and for that reason sometimes all the more startling. Or, by a different process, a great moral truth, important to all men and a part of all men's experience, took possession of his mind and dwelt there, with accessories, analogies, and associations, till it had absorbed their essences. Then it grew clear again, but with more body and strength, like wine. The "Ode to Duty" would seem to have had such a genesis.

The poems written in 1818, on the contrary, are based on rare occurrences, or on forced and peculiar fancies. They are deliberately didactic and obtrusively sententious. And like poetry of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, they abound in personifications and other artificial devices. No longer content with the

religious feeling supplied by nature and by human experience, the poet invokes again and again the agency of angels and seraphs. What kind of truth, moral, historical, scientific, or poetic, we ask ourselves, is preserved in the lines:

> Time was when field and watery cove
> With modulated echoes rang,
> While choirs of fervent angels sang
> Their vespers in the grove ?

What grove, what field ? we wonder; and how could Wordsworth have written "watery cove"? There are many lovers of poetry who find fault with pieces like "The Thorn," with its "little muddy pond," but this is at least Wordsworth. Any poor poet, with a defective ear and a reluctance to call things by their names, might have written the first stanza of the "Second Inscription":

> Pause, Traveller ! whosoe'er thou be
> Whom chance may lead to this retreat,
> Where silence yields reluctantly
> Even to the fleecy straggler's bleat."

And, in the "Evening Voluntary," the verse

> Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve !

cannot but leave us grieving.

As a seal and sign of social rank, and in recognition of his services to the Tory party, Wordsworth was appointed Justice of the Peace, towards the end of the year 1818.

On October 3, 1819, Mrs. Coleridge writes, rather pettishly, to Poole: "The Wordsworths are quite in request. You have no notion how much respectability attaches to them. Their society is much courted." This letter also contains a reference to the Pantisocratic adventure: "In the literary gazette there was a full account of our juvenile American scheme, and that Mrs. Fricker and Mrs. Southey had consented to go with the young people in their wild scheme of colonization."

The fatal narrowing of Wordsworth's outlook is shown

by his amazing statement to Wrangham: "Except now and then, when Southey accommodates me, I see no new books whatever." Yet these were the years of "Alastor," "The Revolt of Islam," "Endymion," "Manfred," the third and fourth cantos of "Childe Harold," "Rob Roy," "The Heart of Midlothian"—one hardly knows where to stop, for when were there ever three richer years than those that had just passed? When could a man have missed more by reading "no new books whatever"? The remark implies contempt. It is stupid and vain. There is no real excuse in his further statement: "My reading powers were never very great, and now they are much diminished, especially by candle-light. And as to buying books, I can affirm that on *new* books I have not spent five shillings for the last five years. I include reviews, magazines, pamphlets, etc., etc." This is mere intellectual priggishness. The time of life had come, as he very well knew, when he could no longer draw upon the fresh sensuous impressions of youth. He had uttered the word of individual moral insight which it is given to some souls to have once, and usually no more than once. He had now reached the age when, if a man is to keep alive and not be a dead-weight upon society, he must love more and listen more, read more and concede more, than youth required or the active energy of early middle life allowed. This was no time for withdrawal from the world. Had he read new books, and sought the society of their authors, had he admitted the value of novel ideas and humbly tried to sympathize with them, the last thirty or thirty-five years of his life would have been freer from that self-complacency which, when disturbed, produced an irritable temper and a panic fear of change.

CHAPTER XXIV

FAME AND FAVOUR

THAT Wordsworth had not altogether abandoned the principles upon which his best poems were composed is shown by his publishing "Peter Bell," a tale in verse, in the spring of 1819. It was printed for Longman, with an engraving of a picture painted by Sir George Beaumont expressly for this purpose. In the dedication, to Southey, Poet Laureate, Wordsworth says, "pains have been taken at different times," during the long interval since the poem first saw the light, in 1798, "to make the production less unworthy of a favourable reception; or, rather, to fit it for filling *permanently* a station, however humble, in the Literature of my Country." There is something admirable in the courage which enabled a man to hold his head so high when London was calling unto Edinburgh in ridicule of his self-conceit. The poem, he says, "was composed under a belief that the Imagination not only does not require for its exercise the intervention of supernatural agency, but that, though such agency be excluded, the faculty may be called forth as imperiously and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents, within the compass of poetic probability, in the humblest departments of daily life."

It will probably never be known how much of "Peter Bell" really belongs to the period of "Lyrical Ballads," and how much, as it was printed twenty-one years later, is due to picking and patching. The original *motif* was the same as that of the "Ancient Mariner." A hard-hearted, wayward man is arrested and touched by nature. In the "Ancient Mariner," nature unfolds her extraordinary powers; she shows a face of terror. In "Peter Bell" it is the "blue and grey, and tender green," of a mild night, it is a "soft and fertile nook,"

a "silent stream," that creep into the soul. In each poem human dulness and cruelty are rebuked by a lesson drawn from the suffering of an inferior animal. In each an effort is made to produce a sense of awe. In each a ballad measure is used, and we also find those unexpected leaps from the trivial to the sublimely impressive which occur in the best ballads. Where the planning of the two poems differs most is that whereas Coleridge meant to make preternatural events seem real by the use of simple language and natural detail, Wordsworth meant to invest natural events with the glamour which usually accompanies accounts of the preternatural. I do not know why Wordsworth's production was withheld from "Lyrical Ballads." In its original form it probably would have stood comparison with "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" better than it does now. There was probably no attempt at humour in it then. Wordsworth appears to have been afraid that its stark simplicity and realism would provoke ridicule, and therefore to have given to it, especially in the introductory stanzas, those awkward touches of facetiousness which sadly impair its unity of tone. In her Grasmere Journal, on February 20, 1802, Dorothy says, "I wrote the first part of 'Peter Bell.'" The next day she adds, "I wrote the second prologue to 'Peter Bell.' . . . After dinner I wrote the first prologue." She means of course that she was copying. Internal evidence points to the conclusion that the first prologue was shorter than the second, and perhaps contained no more than these three exquisite stanzas:

Long have I loved what I behold,
The night that calms, the day that cheers;
The common growth of mother earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears.

The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
I shall not covet for my dower,
If I along that lowly way
With sympathetic heart may stray,
And with a soul of power.

These given, what more need I desire
To stir, to soothe, or elevate ?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life's daily prospect find,
May find or these create ?

These lines contain Wordsworth's æsthetic creed in 1798, and come as near being a statement of his religious faith and moral system at that time as anything we possess. It is a pity he felt obliged to surround them with thirty-five prolix and uncharacteristically playful stanzas, however charming some of these may be. We know from his own admission, though internal evidence would have sufficed, that the following stanzas were not in the poem as originally written:

'Tis said that through prevailing grace
He not unmoved did notice now
The cross upon thy shoulder scored,
Meek beast, in memory of the Lord
To whom all human kind shall bow;

In memory of that solemn day
When Jesus humbly deigned to ride,
Entering the proud Jerusalem,
By an immeasurable stream
Of shouting people deified.

The apostrophe to the "meek Beast," the double negative "not unmoved," the long adjective "immeasurable," the inversion in the last line—are marks of Wordsworth's later manner. Moreover, in 1798, he would, I think, have shrunk from anything that might have looked like an acknowledgment of Christianity. These stanzas were omitted in the edition of 1827, as though Wordsworth felt that they did not harmonize with the context. He altered and restored them later. Apparently he realized not only that confusion of motives was a blemish, but that the admixture of humour was ill-timed and awkward, for he also withdrew a stanza which had a satirical turn. The reason he offered, however, was that the "profanity" gave

offence to some overscrupulous person. The stanza ran thus:

> Is it a party in a parlour ?
> Cramm'd just as they on earth were cramm'd—
> Some slipping punch, some sipping tea,
> But, as you by their faces see,
> All silent and all damn'd !

It was the crude simplicities, not the overrefinement of the poem, that shocked most readers. Even friendly and tolerant Crabb Robinson was disturbed. He wrote in his Diary, May 3, 1819: "Barnes attacked me about 'Peter Bell,' but this is a storm I must yield to. Wordsworth has set himself back ten years by the publication of this work." Curiously enough, the reviewer in *Blackwood's* was more lenient, and urged little objection against the "commonness" of the poem, though finding fault with its "dallying prolixity," an accurately descriptive phrase.

But how all these objections fall into their proper perspective as secondary things, when we read in Coleridge's notebook his unhesitating opinion: "Wordsworth's most wonderful and admirable poem 'Peter Bell.'" !

If the poem in any shape had appeared in "Lyrical Ballads," with its companions, it would have been even more ridiculed than they were. Coming out in 1819, it had a large sale, as compared with Wordsworth's previous publications, and a fairly respectful reception. Readers by this time knew what to look for in Wordsworth; and in "Peter Bell" there is much that is touching, much that is beautiful. The several bits of landscape are exquisitely composed, and the artist has more colours on his palette than usual. The Ass is made almost humanly pathetic. Peter is no mean example of dramatic creation. The feeling is imparted that external nature is in league with the moral world. To do this is surely one of the great objects of poetry.

Two parodies on "Peter Bell" bear the date 1819. Their writer or writers showed a cruel knowledge of

the foibles of Wordsworth's character, and, moreover, seized very cleverly upon the features in his poetry which lend themselves to this kind of perversion. One is entitled "The Dead Asses, A Lyrical Ballad," and was printed for Smith and Elder. The other and far cleverer burlesque is called "Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad," and was printed for Taylor and Hessey. The latter in its preface and footnotes and Supplementary Essay mocks quite amusingly the clumsy and naive way in which Wordsworth was accustomed to load his volumes with critical remarks, excellent in themselves, but out of place, and with trivial comments on particular poems. It was written by John Hamilton Reynolds, and appeared in April, a few days *before* Wordsworth's poem. This dishonest production reached Shelley at Leghorn, and, according to Mrs. Shelley, amused him exceedingly. He also read Leigh Hunt's review of both the real and the spurious poem, in *The Examiner* for April 26 and May 3. In October he wrote his "Peter Bell the Third," beginning in great good-humour, but soon breaking into a strain of caustic satire. He must have had private information of the fact that Reynolds's book had been printed before its "original," for he calls it "the antenatal Peter." I find nothing in Shelley's "Peter Bell" to indicate that he had read more of Wordsworth's than what was quoted in *The Examiner*. "Peter Bell the Third" is not a parody. It is a grotesque development of the idea that Wordsworth had bartered away his soul. He is the third Peter Bell. And who, we may ask, is the Devil to whom he sells himself, and at whose table he serves? The Devil's house stands in Grosvenor Square, from which we may infer that the Beaumonts or the Lowthers were meant. Shelley's real complaint against Wordsworth is that he has gone over to the enemy—that is, to the Tory party. He draws the very true inference that he has therefore grown dull. All further hints and shadows of hints in this wild burlesque may be dismissed as sheer fancy. The best stanzas are those about Coleridge, in Part the Fifth; some of them have

a tragic depth unusual in any but the greatest satire, as, for example:

> He was a mighty poet—and
> A subtle-souled psychologist;
> All things he seemed to understand,
> Of old or new—of sea or land—
> But his own mind—which was a mist.
>
> This was a man who might have turned
> Hell into Heaven—and so in gladness
> A Heaven unto himself have earned;
> But he in shadows undiscerned
> Trusted—and damned himself to madness.

Mrs. Shelley was entirely too conciliatory when she declared, in her Note on "Peter Bell the Third," that nothing personal to Wordsworth was intended in this poem, that it was purely ideal, a criticism of his compositions. It has, on the contrary, not much to say, against Wordsworth's works, which Shelley admired, and a great deal to say against his choosing his friends among the rich and powerful. We infer, to be sure, that Shelley had found "The Excursion" dull and took for granted that "Peter Bell" was dull too. He had never met either Wordsworth or Coleridge. His motive was entirely personal, in one sense, though without spite or jealousy. The Manchester massacre had occurred in August, and the Yorkshire bread riots in October. He was burning with indignation against all persons who, like Wordsworth, upheld the cause of "order" at the expense, as he conceived, of justice and mercy. He made fun of "Peter Bell" for no other reason than because he deemed its author a renegade.

A short time after "Peter Bell," in the summer, Longman brought out another slim volume of verse, entitled "The Waggoner, a Poem, to which are added Sonnets, by William Wordsworth." The Dedication is to Charles Lamb.

During the winter evenings of 1819 Wordsworth made an anthology of his favourite passages from poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which he dictated to Sara Hutchinson. In her neat handwriting, and

preceded with a pen-and-ink portrait of Wordsworth and an original sonnet, they made a beautiful volume, which was given to the Lady Mary Lowther, daughter of the Earl of Lonsdale, as a Christmas present. About a third of the extracts are from Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, of whom Wordsworth wrote, in his Essay Supplementary to the Preface, 1815: "Now it is remarkable that, excepting a passage or two in the Windsor Forest of Pope, and some delightful pictures in the Poems of Lady Winchelsea, the Poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the Paradise Lost and the Seasons does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination."

In the spring of 1820 Longman published, uniform with the two other volumes of that year, "The River Duddon, a series of Sonnets, Vaudracour and Julia, and other Poems, to which is annexed a Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes in the North of England, by William Wordsworth." The book was dedicated to the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, D.D.

It was a happy thought, originating with Coleridge, to give the poetical history of a stream, from its head-waters among the quiet hills to its place of rest in the sea,

> Where mightiest rivers into powerless sleep
> Sink, and forget their nature.

One who should expect a series of bright and lively pictures, and much variety of colour, or an attempt to delight the ear with musical imitations of waterfalls and softly gliding reaches, would be disappointed in this work. He will find what he wants in Tennyson's "Brook" and "The Lady of Shalott," or in "Sohrab and Rustum." When Dante described the descent of the Arno from savage hills to savage towns, he did not linger to tell of dimpling pools and waving reeds; his curt words were of crime and war and treachery. So

if we have any insight into Wordsworth's character, we shall be prepared to look for few images and many thoughts, few efforts merely to give pleasure, and a constant care to elevate the mind. Somewhat bare and austere these sonnets are, like the bleak hills and stony valleys they celebrate. They keep faith with their subjects, a self-sacrificing loyalty that scorns the specious gains of flattery. Few mountainous regions in old populated countries are so unblessed with legends as the English Lake district. It has virtually no local folk-songs. We can imagine in what a string of ballads Scott would have woven the history of the Tweed. There is almost as little human activity in the upper parts of the Westmorland vales as in the interior of Iceland or Skye; and so we have not in these sonnets the crowded life with which Crabbe filled his scenes. Yet Wordsworth makes the most of his legitimate opportunities, and the solitary farm, the stepping-stones, the small white church, the paths that lose themselves, are all the more touching amid the silence. Measure and artistic restraint, the self-sufficiency of truth, the confidence of reason, dwell at home in the Duddon poems. And at the close, as if to release the pent-up loveliness till then withheld, and the intellectual passion and yearning so long restrained, he gives us the great sonnet which begins:

> I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide.

After the publication of the Duddon volume, Wordsworth's life was diversified in three ways—by the issuing of new editions of his works, with an admixture of fresh poems, by journeys on the Continent, to London, and elsewhere, and by ventures in the political field. There were, of course, domestic joys and sorrows, which, however, differed from those of ordinary men only in being perhaps more poignantly felt. They left comparatively few traces in his poetry. He strove, through his remaining years, to be more objective in his work. Few poets had ever found so much of their material and inspiration in their homes, their surroundings, and their friendships;

henceforth his best poems, with here and there a notable exception, such as his sonnet "On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford for Naples," were to deal with public and historical subjects. At the time of his fiftieth birthday, in April, 1820, he might well have surveyed his past with satisfaction and his prospects for the future with confidence. His place as a great English poet was securely established. His literary career might even then have seemed almost fully rounded out, as indeed it was. His family life was serene. The education of his children was proceeding favourably. His dear sister was as yet in good health, and still the sharer of his highest joys. His brother Christopher was eminent as churchman and scholar. The breach with Coleridge had healed outwardly, though not inwardly. Nearly all the other friendships of his youth and early manhood remained unimpaired. Mathews and Beaupuy were dead, but with Jones and Wrangham he was still on the old footing; with Southey he was neighbourly; toward Sir Walter Scott his affection and respect had increased; the Lambs and the Wordsworths grew closer to one another every year, and a new friend had been found in Crabb Robinson. We are sorry to hear less of Thomas Poole; distance may have had something to do with that. The Clarksons were kind and cheerful as ever. Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, through Dorothy's affection for the latter, had become friends of the family. The Hutchinsons were people of solid worth, and Sara Hutchinson was a useful and beloved member of the Wordsworth family. Mrs. Wordsworth was a good manager, provident, hospitable, and yet able to spare thought and time for aiding her husband in his work. The poet's income was sufficient for the necessities of his household.

Only one cloud cast a shadow over this bright scene—a melancholy fear of political change. His patriotism was historical. He had a high, perhaps an exaggerated conception of England's share in civilizing the world. At least she had, in his opinion, saved Europe. He idealized the institutions which he thought had produced

so much good. They formed a glorious image in his mind. He spoke and wrote of the fabric of the state as if it had been a homogeneous, self-sustaining edifice, with parts so organically related that if one were taken away all would collapse. Every proposed reform, he insisted, should be considered with reference to this danger. Of government as a partnership between living men, the terms and purposes of which might vary from time to time as conditions required, he had apparently no conception. Yet this was the one deep and lasting doctrine announced by the Revolution, adopted even by Napoleon, and beginning, as early as 1820, to reassert its vitality in Liberalism. It was Wordsworth's high privilege as a poet to defend and glorify the works of the spirit as against the works of the flesh. He had idealized the ancient order of life in England. It represented in his eyes spiritual in conflict with material values. This conclusion seemed to him all the more necessary because the tampering which he dreaded began in the shape of material reforms. Thus his idealism, the purity and strength of his imagination, deceived him. And since the reforms were inevitable, he took a gloomy view of the future. His reconciliation with the established religion of his country was due in part to a just view of the alliance existing between religion and poetry as upholders of spiritual against material interests. But it was due also to his sympathy with the false and unfortunate attitude of the Church in opposing reforms. He was attracted by the Church's claim to possess an organic life, just as the State was supposed to be a thing in itself.

On July 10, William, Mary, and Dorothy Wordsworth, with the newly-married Mr. and Mrs. Monkhouse and their sister, Miss Horrocks, relatives of Mrs. Wordsworth, set forth on a Continental tour, from which they returned to London on November 8. They bought a carriage and travelled in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France. Crabb Robinson joined them at Lucerne. After their return to England Wordsworth composed many poems on subjects suggested during the tour.

The genesis of nearly all these poems was recorded by his wife and his sister. The second volume of "Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals" and the Eversley edition of Wordsworth's Poems contain copious selections from their diaries.

In many instances the poems are no improvement upon the prose narratives. What they gain in brevity, weight, and sententiousness, they lose in simplicity. If they are more musical they are also more stiff and obscure. They were written, as it were, with an iron pen. They make considerable demand upon the intellect, and appeal only slightly to the heart. An attentive reader will be pleased with their echoes from Milton and Waller and other poets, but will discover no fresh images and few haunting cadences. A noble spirit, and a power of pressing ideas out of facts, he will, of course, find.

Crabb Robinson, the Pepys of that generation, fully appreciated his good-fortune in being the travelling companion of the greatest living English poet, and from the time he joined the party his Diary adds to the fullness of the record. But he acknowledged that the two other accounts put his to shame.

Of natural objects those that most impressed the travellers were waterfalls. It had always been so with William and Dorothy. Of historical subjects the favourites were those that commemorated resistance to tyrants—to the Austrians and Napoleon, or Buonaparte, as they insisted on calling him—and shrines and churches in lonely places. They noted the prostrate column of granite which was being dragged to Milan for a triumphal edifice and was left by the roadside when Buonaparte fell, and the pillar at Boulogne left unfinished by "the Corsican."

In a letter to the Earl of Lonsdale, from Paris, Wordsworth remarks: "Nothing which I have seen in this city has interested me at all like the Jardin des Plantes, with the living animals and the Museum of Natural History which it includes. Scarcely could I refrain from tears of admiration at the sight of this apparently boundless exhibition of the wonders of the creation. The statues

and pictures of the Louvre affect me feebly in comparison."

Almost immediately after arriving in Paris the Wordsworths called on Madame Vallon and the Baudouins. As Professor Legouis has informed us in his "William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon," a book in which he has communicated the extremely interesting results of his inquiries into the fate of Annette and her descendants, Wordsworth's daughter Caroline was by 1820 the mother of a little girl. He says: "It is touching to find among the child's names that of the English aunt who had always borne her a touching affection. She was christened Louise Marie Caroline Dorothée." He suggests that her grandfather took her to the Jardin des Plantes to see the animals. M. Legouis and I made a pilgrimage together in 1924 to the grave in which she lies buried with her mother in the cemetery of Père Lachaise. The inscription on the headstone we translated thus: "To the memory of our mother, Anne Caroline William Wordsworth, widow of M. Jean Baptiste Baudouin, formerly sub-director of the Mont de Piété, born December 6, 1792, died in 1862." One of her living descendants has shown me one superbly bound volume of Wordsworth's Poems of 1815 and his portrait in crayon (apparently by Nash, and very closely resembling that belonging to Mrs. Moorsom), and several other mementos, all of which had come down in her family from the time of the visit in 1820.

Robinson, who had been told their story, wrote in his Diary, under date of October 3: "Having breakfasted alone, I repaired to Rue Charlot and was introduced to Mrs. Baudoin, a mild, amiable little woman in appearance. . . . Captain Baudoin accompanied us to the Monkhouses." On October 6 he wrote: "I dined at Mr. Baudouin's, who after dinner accompanied me to the Odéon." On October 7 he wrote: "Walked to see the W's. They were out, but I called and saw Mrs. Valon. We took coffee at the Mille Colonnes." On October 8 he wrote: "Went to Mr. Baudoin's. The W's. were not returned from Versailles. I went

alone to Miss Williams. . . . Went down again to B.'s and saw Miss W." The Wordsworths were living in the rue Charlot, boulevard du Temple.

Dorothy, writing to Mrs. Clarkson, October 14, 1820, from Paris, says: "We have had great satisfaction at Paris in seeing our Friends whom I have mentioned to you. Of this when we meet. Last night we drank tea at Miss Williams'. She is a very sweet woman, and we were much pleased with our visit. I hope we shall go again. We talked much of you." This was Helen Maria Williams, the republican authoress.

The Bishop of Lincoln states in the "Memoirs" that after their return to London the Wordsworths remained there "for the pleasure of seeing Mr. Rogers, Charles Lamb and his sister, the Lloyds, Mr. R. Sharp, Mr. Kenyon, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Talfourd and others." He continues:

"On the 17th and 18th [November] they were with their dear friends at Hampstead Heath (Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Hoare), whence Wordsworth walked to visit Coleridge (in Grove Street, Highgate) on the 18th. On the 23rd, Wordsworth, his wife and his sister, left London for Cambridge, to visit his brother, Dr. Wordsworth, who had been promoted from the rectory of Lambeth to the mastership of Trinity College, in the summer of 1820. They remained his guests till the 6th December, and then proceeded to visit Sir George and Lady Beaumont at Coleorton, where they remained till the 20th; and on Christmas Eve they arrived at Rydal Mount."

Though energy was lacking for a vast creative task like the completion of "The Recluse," the six years from 1821 to 1827 were filled with quiet industry. The now prematurely aged poet was continually revising his earlier work, including "The Prelude." From time to time a visit to London, Coleorton, or Lowther Castle interrupted these labours. Young John Wordsworth, prepared by his father, went to New College, Oxford; young William attended a little school kept by Hartley Coleridge at Ambleside; Dora enjoyed the society of Coleridge's daughter Sara and Southey's daughter

Edith, who were growing up together at Keswick. Gardening, which is a fine art in the Lake country, had turned the grounds of Rydal Mount into a paradise. Literary strangers who passed that way were generally the poet's admirers and therefore heavenly visitants. By shutting out obnoxious magazines and not taking in a daily newspaper, the serpent of radicalism was excluded. Poor Dorothy lamented to Crabb Robinson that she was missing Lamb's "Essays of Elia," which were appearing in *The London Magazine*, a periodical detested by her brother.

There were three great public questions which agitated Wordsworth during the years 1821 and 1822—Parliamentary Reform, Catholic Emancipation, and the liberty of the Press. His painful interest in these matters kept him from working placidly at "The Recluse," and gave a turn to almost all the poetry he found himself now able to compose. For the younger generation of poets he professed unmeasured contempt. We must suppose he included not only Byron, Moore, and Leigh Hunt, but also Shelley and Keats, in the ill-tempered denunciation contained in the following passage from a letter to H. C. Robinson, written in March, 1821: "As to poetry, I am sick of it; it overruns the country in all the shapes of the plagues of Egypt—frog-poets (the croakers), mice-poets (the nibblers), a class rhyming to mice (which shall be nameless), and fly-poets. Gray, in his dignified way, calls flies the 'insect youth,' a term wonderfully applicable upon this occasion. But let us desist, or we shall be accused of envying the rising generation!"

Dr. Johnson wrote of Milton: "It appears in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal, as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion." Wordsworth, as the course

of his life shows, had not a *real* confidence in himself. He was curiously compounded of timorousness and courage. He was unwilling to take the consequences of the boldest and best acts of his life. He failed to keep steadily in view until the end those glorious purposes which were among the true sources of his greatness. His contempt for other men was due to a stubborn refusal to look into their merits. No one was more sensitive to poetic excellence; few have possessed stronger powers of discrimination. If his praise was scanty, if his judgments were often harsh and narrow, it was because of a moral poverty. There is much truth in what De Quincey remarked, with the venom of mortified vanity, if we are careful to restrict it to the second Wordsworth, who had renounced the things of his brave youth—namely, that he was a spoiled child of Fortune. A man who had been more frequently contradicted and thwarted, who had learned to put up with criticism from kind but unadoring comrades, would have been more tolerant, and, in reference to his own work, would have been less inclined to force the note, and all this without necessarily surrendering any vital position in morals or æsthetics.

Dorothy Wordsworth was anxious that he should employ his time to better purpose, on "The Recluse," and "the poem on his own life." "But the will," she says, "never governs *his* labours." She wishes he had something of Southey's method, and Southey something of his inspiration. From her approval of Southey's wretched "Vision of Judgment," in which he translates George the Third to Heaven, we may fairly conclude that her brother tolerated that piece of sycophancy. Nothing was now too strong for him if it expressed loyalty to the Constitution and the Church of England. From the proposed admission of Roman Catholics to equal political rights, he anticipated a union between them and "other dissenters and infidels" for the overthrow of the Anglican system.

He opposed the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts. Turning his back on the principles which

governed his better days, he violently denounced the movement to extend the Parliamentary franchise. "When I was young"—he wrote to Lord Londsale, December 4, 1821, "giving myself credit for qualities which I did not possess, and measuring mankind by that standard—I thought it derogatory to human nature to set up property in preference to person, as a title for legislative power. That notion has vanished. I now perceive many advantages in our present complex system of representation, which formerly eluded my observation."

While professing to believe that freedom of the Press was the only safeguard of liberty, he declared that he was *therefore* in favour of vigorous restrictions. Despots and their defenders have seldom reasoned otherwise. He put his theory into practice, so far as his own household was concerned, by prohibiting the entry of current magazines.

Needless to say, Wordsworth's name is absent from the honourable list of those who helped Charles Lamb, in the spring of 1822, to raise a fund for the benefit of poor Godwin, who was in even greater straits than usual, and on the point of having his furniture and books sold. Robinson was down for £30, Byron for nearly the same amount, Lamb himself gave £50 from his own scanty resources, and Sir Walter Scott £10, although his political principles were as opposed to Godwin's as Wordsworth's, and his intellectual debt to Godwin nothing whatever.

Except for one or two visits to Lowther Castle Wordsworth appears to have remained at home the whole of 1821 and 1822. He was laboriously composing his "Memorials of a Tour on the Continent," and also his "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." To trace, by means of a series of sonnets on eminent men and noteworthy events, the history of the Christian Church in England, was an enterprise worthy of a great poet. The idea appears to have been original with Wordsworth, and nobly did he carry it out. He followed, to be sure, what might be termed the central or official tradition; within its limits he made a praiseworthy effort to be generous.

Considering the course of life which he had deliberately adopted, it would be too much to expect that he should recognize such deep spiritual currents as Calvinism, Quakerism, and Methodism. His point of view was that of a high-churchman trying to be moderate, though absolutely incapacitated for taking a really broad and catholic survey. But criticism is less concerned with his limitations as an historian than with the degree on which he succeeded in turning history, or what was supposed to be history, into poetry. And here, I think, he is to be highly praised. Some of the sonnets are pompous, some are mechanical; but a certain number show the hand of a consummate artist moulding into sensuous form lofty and passionately conceived thoughts. The best of all, and one of the finest sonnets in our language, is "Mutability." Then there are the three splendid sonnets on "King's College Chapel, Cambridge," and the sweet tribute to Izaak Walton. The sonnet called "Imaginative Regrets," laboured and harsh though it is, contains the wonderful picture of a desert, with "stalking pillars built of fiery sand." The sonnet on "Old Abbeys" is a plea for an æsthetic and historical reverence for mediæval faith, a more temperate and wholesome plea than many which have been put forth. The sonnet on "Catechizing" touches the heart because of its exquisitely pathetic reference to the poet's mother. Those beginning "As star that shines dependent upon star," and "A genial hearth, a hospitable board," are tranquillizing pictures of the Church as it is and always has been, at the points where it touches the daily lives of men through its rural places of worship and its humane, learned, and devout clergy. By using the sonnet form, the poet was able to rise to these high levels when the subject warmed him. He escaped the danger of seeming to attempt anything like a systematic discourse, and could select without much restraint some of the really inspiring moments and figures of Church history. Where he was caught by the lure of system he failed, as in the sonnets on "Baptism," "Sponsors," and "The Commination Service."

The volume entitled "Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820," was published by Longman early in 1822. It is strange that one of the best sonnets in the book, "Author's Voyage Down the Rhine (Thirty Years Ago)," was never reprinted by Wordsworth. "Ecclesiastical Sketches" was published by Longman probably in the same month as the "Memorials."

There were one hundred and two sonnets in the first edition. Thirty others were added in successive editions of the complete works. Only two other poems are ascribed to the year 1822, both of them composed on seeing the foundation preparing for the erection of Rydal Chapel. They might better have been left unprinted, though as contributions to a local festival they showed good feeling. Too much of Wordsworth's verse, in the last thirty years of his life, was inspired—if the word is permissible in this connection—by a view of nature according to which this vast, mysterious world is nothing more than an object-lesson pointing the way to Heaven. The prevalence of this view among hymn writers is a chief cause of the general failure of their productions, as poems.

Only three poems are known to have been written by Wordsworth in 1823. That entitled "Memory," after six stanzas in a somewhat artificial style, ends with five lines of pure beauty and sincere feeling. Mindful of his own youth, and thinking, as he tells us, of his young friend Hartley Coleridge, upon whom a storm of temptation was beating, he reflects that, if early years are well spent, age may

> steal to his allotted nook
> Contented and serene;
>
> With heart as calm as lakes that sleep,
> In frosty moonlight glistening;
> Or mountain rivers, where they creep
> Along a channel smooth and deep,
> To their own far-off murmurs listening.

A partial explanation of the fact that from this time forth Wordsworth produced less and less poetry is that

he suffered much from failure of sight, due to inflamed eyelids. He was obliged almost entirely to give up reading, and spent his days in the open air. The ample grounds of Rydal Mount, with the high terrace walk that commands a view of Rydal Water and the steeps of Loughrigg, were his great delight.

In these years of declining courage and distrust of the present, Wordsworth turned to the finished world of antiquity for solace and employment. He had completed a translation of three books of the "Æneid" by February 5, 1819. Five years later he took this work in hand again, and sent the manuscript to Coleridge. The latter disapproved of the undertaking. Even if performed as successfully as possible, it would add nothing to Wordsworth's fame, but it was, he said, not well done. "Since Milton," he wrote, "I know of no poet with so many *felicities* and unforgettable lines and stanzas as you. And to read, therefore, page after page without a single *brilliant* note depresses me, and I grow peevish with you for having wasted your time on a work *so* much below you, that you cannot *stoop* and *take*. Finally, my conviction is that you undertake an *impossibility*, and that there is no medium between a prose version and one on the avowed principle of compensation in the widest sense. I confine myself to *Virgil*, when I say this."

The same impulse that caused Wordsworth to translate Virgil impelled him to write verses on "The Pillar of Trajan," though his immediate purpose was to show his son how easily an Oxford prize-poem might be composed on this subject. The last nine lines lift the spirit, with something of his old imaginative power:

> Where now the haughty Empire that was spread
> With such fond hope? her very speech is dead;
> Yet glorious Art the power of Time defies,
> And Trajan still, through various enterprise,
> Mounts, in this fine illusion, toward the skies:
> Still are we present with the Imperial Chief,
> Nor cease to gaze upon the bold Relief
> Till Rome, to silent marble unconfined,
> Becomes with all her years a vision of the Mind.

Only two other poems are ascribed to 1825, six to 1826, and about a score to 1827. Of all these only four are well known or much worth knowing: the lines "To a Skylark," beginning "Ethereal minstrel! Pilgrim of the Sky!" and three sonnets, "Scorn not the Sonnet, Critic, you have frowned," "There is a pleasure in poetic pains," and "If thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven," and even this last was probably written long before 1827. There are fine parts also in the poem "To May," "Though many suns have risen and set." The "Farewell Lines addressed to Charles and Mary Lamb on the occasion of their removing from London to the country" are, one may say without presumption, quite unworthy of their subject. The sonnet entitled "Retirement" is thoroughly immoral. No Epicurean poet of the Roman decadence could have taught a worse lesson.

Coleridge was the only friend left who had the courage to speak freely to Wordsworth by way of criticism. After a few attempts Lamb had given it up, and even the keen hints half hidden in sportive language no longer occurred in his letters. Robinson once ventured to ease his mind of a certain anxiety, but not directly to the poet. He expressed his misgivings to Dorothy, between whom and himself there had sprung up a delightful intimacy. No doubt he hoped she would in some discreet way communicate the matter to her brother. Writing about the classification of the poems in the projected complete edition of 1827—a subject on which a great deal of needless advice was being given, for Wordsworth did as he pleased in the end and arranged them according to a system which nobody understood but himself—Robinson took his courage in both hands, and said:

"It is a sort of moral and intellectual suicide in your brother not to have continued his admirable series of poems 'dedicated to liberty'—he might add 'and public virtue.' . . . I assure you it gives me real pain when I think that some future commentator may possibly hereafter write: 'This great poet survived to the fifth

decennary of the nineteenth century, but he appears to have died in the year 1814, as far as life consisted in an active sympathy with the temporary welfare of his fellow-creatures. He had written heroically and divinely against the tyranny of Napoleon, but was quite indifferent to all the successive tyrannies which disgraced the succeeding times.' "

This remarkable prophecy has been more than fulfilled. The date of Wordsworth's "death" has been fixed by some "commentators" as early as 1807. Others, less exacting, grant him six or seven years more. A few, mindful of the austere beauty of some of the later sonnets, and not insensible to the artistic finish of almost everything that proceeded from his pen, prefer to think that, like a graceful shoot growing from the mighty trunk of a pollarded elm, an excellent minor poet survived for very many years the *vates sacer*.

Robinson accepted a pressing invitation to visit the Lakes on his way home from a trip in Ireland and Scotland in the autumn of 1826, but, as Dora Wordsworth was at that time critically ill, he did not stay at Rydal Mount, and had only a few days of Wordsworth's company. They walked on Loughrigg Fell, and compared the beauty of the English and Scottish lakes with those of Killarney.

The delicate question on which Robinson had touched in his letter to Dorothy was probably not mentioned, though he had a great deal of honest bluntness with all his amiability and tact. He had said some very bold things to judges on the bench, but would scarcely have had the hardihood to rebuke Wordsworth on Loughrigg. A safer topic was the distribution of poems in the new edition, and perhaps Robinson reported Lamb's remark: "There is only one good order, and that is the order in which they were written—that is, a history of the poet's mind."

Robinson saw much of William Blake in the last three years of the latter's life, and always found that the mention of Wordsworth's name awoke in him the visionary faculty. We can see the inspired old man,

in his bare lodgings, shabbily dressed, relating to the shrewd lawyer his conversations with Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, and ranging in this august company the author of the "Intimations of Immortality."

Robinson wrote on February 10, 1825,

"He professes to be very hostile to Plato, and reproaches Wordsworth with being, not a Christian, but a Platonist. . . . He asked me whether Wordsworth believed in the Scriptures. On my replying in the affirmative, he said he had been much pained by reading the Introduction to The Excursion. It brought on a fit of illness. The passage was produced, and read:

> Jehovah—with his thunder and the choir
> Of shouting angels, and the empyreal thrones—
> I pass them unalarmed.

This '*pass them unalarmed*' greatly offended Blake Does Mr. Wordsworth think his mind can surpass Jehovah? I tried to explain this passage in a sense in harmony with Blake's own theories, but failed, and Wordsworth was finally set down as a Pagan; but still with high praise, as the greatest poet of the age."

Flaxman, that other mystical genius, had expressed to Robinson similar misgivings about the same passage. Blake had a short and ready way with men who turned aside from "God" to "Nature," the two opposite principles in the universe as he conceived of it. "Dante," he declared calmly, "was an Atheist—a mere politician, busied about this world, as Milton was, till in his old age he returned to God, whom he had had in his childhood." "I am to continue my visits," Robinson concluded, "and to read to him Wordsworth, of whom he seems to entertain a high idea." On December 27 Robinson wrote:

"I read to him Wordsworth's incomparable ode, which he heartily enjoyed. But he repeated, 'I fear Wordsworth loves nature, and nature is the work of the Devil. The Devil is in us as far as we are nature.' . . . The parts of Wordsworth's ode which Blake most enjoyed were the most obscure—at all events, those which I least like and comprehend."

CHAPTER XXV

THE SAGE OF RYDAL

The death of Sir George Beaumont, on February 7, 1827, made the first gap in the circle of friends who had accompanied Wordsworth through middle life. The loss was deeply felt. Sir George had about him a sweet dignity which caused men in his presence to speak and act as becomingly as they could.

He was a sincere and accomplished lover of the arts. His kindness and generosity to Wordsworth should never be forgotten. But wherever the latter deferred to his taste in matters of poetry, the result was unfortunate. To a desire to please Sir George we must attribute, in many of Wordsworth's poems, after 1807, a pietistic flavour, a shrinking conservatism, a return to a conventional style, and a general air of having been written by one who felt himself to be old. As a final proof of friendship, Sir George bequeathed to the poet an annuity of £100 "to defray the expenses of a yearly tour."* The form of the gift was well chosen, for Wordsworth had truly said that wandering was his passion. His library, for example, which was ill provided with works of modern fiction and poetry, was remarkably rich in books of travel, some of them ancient and rare.

The period of five years which followed the publication of "Ecclesiastical Sketches" ended in the issue of a collective edition of Wordsworth's poems, including "The Excursion," the preface to the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads," and the Essay Supplementary, in five handsome volumes. The dedication is to Sir George

* Mrs. Coleridge, in a letter to Poole, July, 1827 (original in the British Museum), says that Sir George left to her and Southey £100 apiece, and to Wordsworth £100 and an annuity of £100 for life.

Beaumont. Longman was the publisher, the date 1827, and the price forty-five shillings.

The periodical correcting of old poems for new editions gave work to the whole household. The state of Wordsworth's eyes preventing him from holding the pen, an immense deal of drudgery fell upon his wife, his sister, his daughter, and Sara Hutchinson. As far back as 1816, Charles Lamb had hinted that perhaps he leaned too heavily upon his loving helpers: "Your manual graphy is terrible, dark as Lycophron. . . . I should not wonder if the constant making out of such Paragraphs is the cause of that weakness in Mrs. W.'s Eyes, as she is tenderly pleased to express it. Dorothy, I hear, has mounted spectacles; so you have deoculated two of your dearest relations in life." The labour of preparing the edition of 1827 was enormous, when added to the nervous strain of ministering to the mental and moral needs of a man suffering from depression of spirits. Among several suitors for Dora's hand, the one favoured by her was Edward Quillinan, a retired army officer of Irish descent and a Catholic, son-in-law of Sir Egerton Brydges. He had been settled since 1822 at Rydal, where his wife died within a year, leaving two young daughters. For many years Wordsworth refused his consent to Dora's marriage, or gave it with such painful reluctance that it did not take place till 1841.

It is most pleasant, and surprising, to learn that in June and July, 1828, Wordsworth and Coleridge were once more fellow-travellers. The arrival of a letter from S. T. C. had become a rare event at Rydal Mount. His name seldom occurs in the Wordsworth correspondence during the twenties. Yet now the two poets, with Dora Wordsworth, spent about six weeks together in Flanders, the Rhine Valley, and Holland.

An Irish traveller, Thomas Colley Grattan, has set down with great fulness, in a curious and rare book, his memories of three days, beginning June 25, 1828, spent with the two poets in the neighbourhood of Brussels and Namur. He was introduced to them at Brussels. He says of Coleridge:

"He was about five feet five inches in height, of a full and lazy appearance, but not actually stout. He was dressed in black, and wore short breeches, buttoned and tied at the knees, and black silk stockings. And in this costume (the same that he describes himself to have worn in his earliest voyages and travels in the year 1798) he worked along, in public coaches or barges, giving the idea of his original profession, an itinerant preacher. His face was extremely handsome, its expression placid and benevolent. His mouth was particularly pleasing, and his grey eyes, neither large nor prominent, were full of intelligent softness. His hair, of which he had plenty, was entirely white. His forehead and cheeks were unfurrowed, and the latter showed a healthy bloom. . . . Wordsworth was a perfect antithesis to Coleridge—tall, wiry, harsh in features, coarse in figure, inelegant in looks. He was roughly dressed in a long brown *surtout*, striped duck trousers, fustian gaiters, and thick shoes. He more resembled a mountain farmer than a 'Lake poet.' His whole air was unrefined and unprepossessing. . . . There was a total absence of affectation or egotism; not the least effort at display, or assumption of superiority over any of those who were quite prepared to concede it to him. He seemed satisfied to let his friend and fellow-traveller take the lead, with a want of pretension rarely found in men of literary reputation far inferior to his; while there was something unobtrusively amiable in his bearing towards his daughter."

Grattan was carried off his feet by the flow of Coleridge's enthusiastic talk. Wordsworth's remarks, by contrast, appeared at first commonplace; but their truth and good sense gradually became apparent. At Waterloo and Quatre Bras, "Wordsworth keenly inspected the field of battle, insatiably curious." At Namur, Coleridge was content to enjoy the general impression; Wordsworth counted the arches of the bridge "with the accuracy and hardness of a stone-cutter." Wordsworth took the lead in practical matters, making inquiries and keeping in the van. On Grattan's noting his imperfect use of French, Wordsworth told him that "five-and-twenty years previously he understood and spoke it well, but that his abhorrence of the Revolutionary excesses made him resolve if possible to forget the language altogether,

and that for a long time he had not read nor spoken a word of it." Near Dinant the Irish author took a long stroll with Wordsworth, and naturally, since he had previously regarded him as a poet full of "vapoury abstractions," was surprised to find him quite level-headed. "There was," he says, "an inflexible, matter-of-fact manner and spirit in all he said, which came out in a rather hoarse and harsh *burr* that made it disagreeable as well as unimpressive." They talked about Byron, whom Wordsworth declared to have been greatly overrated. He doubted whether Byron had been a man of much originality of mind.

John Wordsworth, having taken orders, was in 1828 curate of a parish at Whitwick, near Coleorton Hall. His aunt Dorothy spent a large part of this year and the next with him. In 1829 he received from Lord Lonsdale the living of Moresby, near Whitehaven. Young William was not so easily settled, having an inability to learn mathematics, and after trying several schools was sent to live in a German home at Hamburg.

The last of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals begins June 26, 1828, and contains notes made during a visit to the Isle of Man where she was the guest of Mrs. Wordsworth's brother, Henry Hutchinson. In reading it we are struck once more with the directness of her way of seeing things. In looking about a market-place, a harbour, a hillside, or a village street, her quick eye caught the striking features of the scene. No moody temper, no preoccupation, stood between her and what she saw. If reflections rose in her mind, they were the result, not the cause, of her impressions. The same happy heart was in her as of old, and the same enjoyment of life's never-ending spectacle. There is a little more independence of judgment than the earlier Journals show, and her power to seize the essentials is better trained; but otherwise no change is perceptible, and the reader feels that she was as well fitted as ever to walk beside a musing master of words and show him what to describe.

If ever a family had reason to be happy, it was the

household at Rydal Mount. One cannot feel quite patient with its head, who lived in gloomy apprehension that his own death was near, and that his country was doomed to some awful fate. But when, early in 1829, the first stroke of a real calamity fell, it descended not on him, but on the most lively, cheerful, and courageous member of the family, on one, as sensitive as himself, who had resisted more bravely, but, as the event showed, less successfully, the encroachments of age. A mysterious ailment befell Dorothy Wordsworth. It is sometimes referred to as an inflammation. It has often been charged to overexertion in those long walks, which had been her delight.* The trouble was really of a nervous character. She recovered from the first attack, though her life was in danger. "What a shock that was to our poor hearts!" wrote Wordsworth to Crabb Robinson, April 6, 1829. "Were she to depart, the phase of my moon would be robbed of light to a degree that I have not courage to think of. During her illness we often thought of your high esteem for her goodness, and of your kindness towards her upon all occasions." Up to this time she had never been seriously ill in her life, and for three years longer she enjoyed fairly good bodily health, with serenity of mind. Then the blow fell again, and after 1832 she remained an invalid. Even when a measure of physical strength returned, she suffered from a belief that she could not walk; and though the clouded mind shone forth at intervals, it was never free. She was still happy and thoughtful of others, but her reason was no longer in continuous command. I have seen letters from her, after her second illness, to members of the Marshall family, which, though fragmentary and evidently written in spite of great weakness, are full of her old kind love. She lived at Rydal Mount till her death in 1855. Her brother's interests were ever her own, and so late as January 9, 1830, she wrote as follows, in a long letter to Charles and Mary Lamb:

"His muscular powers are in no degree diminished. Indeed, I think he walks regularly more than ever,

* Even in 1828 she planned to climb Helvellyn once more.

finding fresh air the best bracing to his weak eyes. He is still the crack skater on Rydal Lake, and as to climbing of mountains, the hardiest and the youngest are yet hardly a match for him. In composition I can perceive no failure, and his imagination seems as vigorous as in youth; yet he shrinks from his great work, and both during the last and present winter has been employed in writing small poems. . . . My sister and I take every opportunity of pressing upon him the necessity of applying to his great work, and this he feels, resolves to do it, and again resolution fails. And now I almost fear habitually that it will be ever so."

There was occurring at this time, 1828, a spiritual event which would have given Wordsworth great encouragement had he known of it. The story is related, with singular straightforwardness, in John Stuart Mill's "Autobiography." At the age of twenty-two Mill had learned more of book-knowledge than perhaps any other youth of his age ever had done. He desired to be a reformer of the world. It seemed to him quite possible that the world might be reformed. Progress was his religion. But when he was in a state of depression from overwork, the fantastic thought forced itself upon him, that even when the world was thoroughly reformed, men might not be happy; it might even be that "the pleasures of life, being no longer kept up by struggle and depression, would cease to be pleasures." I fancy that this was an inadequate expression of a wider sense of want; that his soul, wearied with the continual exercise of analysis, craved some of that synthetic or expansive exercise which is the common and easy movement of poetic and mystical natures, or, to use the word in a narrow sense, of "religious" natures.

"This state of my thoughts and feelings," he says, "made the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time (in the Autumn of 1828) an important event in my life. I took up the collection of his poems from curiosity, with no expectation of mental relief from it, though I had before resorted to poetry with that hope. In the worst period of my depression, I had read through the whole of Byron (then new to me), to try whether

a poet, whose peculiar department was supposed to be that of the intenser feelings, could rouse any feeling in me. As might be expected, I got no good from this reading, but the reverse. . . . But while Byron was exactly what did not suit my condition, Wordsworth was exactly what did."

"What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings, which had no connection with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence. . . . The delight which these poems gave me proved that with culture of this sort there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis."

Three years later, in 1831, Mill saw something of Wordsworth, and it is gratifying to note that his opinion of the man in no wise fell behind his estimate of the poetry. Indeed, of judgments passed upon Wordsworth by persons who knew him only in the second half of his life, Mill's is by far the most important, and, considering who made it, the most favourable. It is set down at length in a letter to John Sterling, October 20 to 22, 1831.

"He talks on no subject more instructively than on states of society and forms of government. Those who best know him seem to be most impressed with the catholic character of his ability. I have been told that Lockhart has said of him that he would have been an admirable country attorney. Now a man who could have been either Wordsworth or a country attorney could certainly have been anything else which circumstances had led him to desire to be. The next thing that struck me was the extreme compre-

hensiveness and philosophic spirit which is in him. By these expressions I mean the direct antithesis of what the Germans most expressively call one-sidedness. Wordsworth seems always to know the pros and cons of every question; and when you think he strikes the balance wrong it is only because you think he estimates erroneously some matter of fact. . . . Then when you get Wordsworth on the subjects which are peculiarly his, such as the theory of his own art (that is, if art is to be defined as the expression or embodying in words or forms of the highest and most refined parts of nature), no one can converse with him without feeling that he has advanced that great subject beyond any other man, being probably the first person who ever combined, with such eminent success in the practice of the art, such high powers of generalization and habits of meditation on its principles. Besides all this, he seems to me the best talker I ever heard (and I have heard several first-rate ones); and there is a benignity and kindliness about his whole demeanour which confirms what his poetry would lead one to expect, along with a perfect simplicity of character which is delightful in anyone, but most of all in a person of first-rate intellect. You see I am somewhat enthusiastic on the subject of Wordsworth, having found him still more admirable and delightful a person on a nearer view than I had figured to myself from his writings. . . ."

Their dear friend Hartley Coleridge gave the Wordsworths much anxiety about this time. He was a simple, humble, kindly soul, a man of genius and full of strange lore, but eccentric and intemperate. They had provided lodgings for him in their neighbourhood. Everybody liked him, and he seemed to be comfortably settled. But having made a little money by his writings, he disappeared. Dorothy wrote sadly to Crabb Robinson that they heard of him as a vagrant, tramping the roads and sleeping in barns. It was her sad duty to report his doings to his mother.

In September, 1831, occurred the last meeting with Scott. In a note to Sir Walter, dated the 16th, Wordsworth describes the manner of his journey north: "'There's a man wi' a veil, and a lass drivin',' exclaimed a little urchin, as we entered merry Carlisle a

couple of hours ago, on our way to Abbotsford." The lass was his daughter Dora; the veil was a screen for his eyes; the horse and cart were predestined to trouble. His nephew Charles, afterwards Bishop of St. Andrews, was going ahead to meet Scott, and this was the beginning of a letter introducing him to that great man. Three days later (Lockhart says the 21st) began that last reunion, in which the feeling of hospitality roused Scott to shake off the fatal lethargy that was stealing over his outwearied mind and frame, and a sense of fellowship restored to Wordsworth the full possession of his poetic powers. The scene has been affectingly described by Lockhart, Sir Walter's son-in-law. It is, in some ways, the culminating passage of his great work. Wordsworth's own account, in the Fenwick note to "Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems," sets it very vividly before us:

"How sadly changed did I find him from the man I had seen so healthy, gay, and hopeful, a few years before, when he said at the inn at Paterdale, in my presence, his daughter Anne also being there, with Mr. Lockhart, my own wife and daughter, and Mr. Quillinan, 'I mean to live till I am *eighty*, and I shall write as long as I live.' But to return to Abbotsford; the inmates and guests we found there were Sir Walter, Major Scott (his son), Anne Scott (his daughter), and Mr. and Mrs. Lockhart, Mr. Liddell, his Lady and Brother, and Mr. Allan the painter, and Mr. Laidlaw, a very old friend of Sir Walter's. One of Burns's sons, an officer in the Indian service, had left the house a day or two before, and had kindly expressed his regret that he could not wait my arrival, a regret that I may truly say was mutual. In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Liddell sang, and Mrs. Lockhart chanted old ballads to her harp; and Mr. Allan, hanging over the back of a chair, told and acted old stories in a humorous way. With this exhibition and his daughter's singing, Sir Walter was much amused, as indeed were we all as far as circumstances would allow. . . . On Tuesday morning Sir Walter Scott accompanied us, and most of the party to Newark Castle on the Yarrow. When we alighted from the carriages he walked pretty stoutly, and had great pleasure in revisiting those his favourite haunts. Of

that excursion the verses *Yarrow Revisited* are a memorial. . . . On our return in the afternoon we had to cross the Tweed directly opposite Abbotsford. The wheel of our carriage grated upon the pebbles in the bed of the stream that there flows somewhat rapidly; a rich but sad light of rather a purple than a golden hue was spread over the Eildon Hills at that moment, and thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the Sonnet beginning—'A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain.' At noon on Thursday we left Abbotsford, and in the morning of that day Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which upon the whole he had led. He had written in my daughter's Album, before he came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her, and while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her in my presence—'I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake: they are probably the last verses I shall ever write.' They show how much his mind was impaired, not by the strain of thought but by the execution, some of the lines being imperfect, and one stanza wanting corresponding rhymes: one letter, the initial S, had been omitted in the spelling of his own name. . . . Both the *Yarrow Revisited* and the 'Sonnet' were sent him before his departure from England."

Considering the author, the subject, the occasion, and the extraordinarily high quality of these farewell lines, it is no wonder they are considered by many readers to be the most interesting sonnet in our language. Well known, too, is Wordsworth's fine tribute to Scott as "the man who has during the last six-and-twenty years diffused more innocent pleasure than ever fell to the lot of any human being to do in his own lifetime." Henry Taylor, the author of "Philip van Artevelde," visited both Scott and Wordsworth in that autumn of 1831, and gives in his "Autobiography" a graphic description of them both:

"Wordsworth and Scott dwelt in regions as far apart as it was possible for men to occupy who each covered so large a space. Neither, I should think, could appre-

ciate the other in full measure; but Scott would perhaps go nearer to a full appreciation of Wordsworth than Wordsworth of Scott. . . . They were as little alike in their aspect as in their genius. The only thing common to both countenances was that neither expressed a limitation. . . . Scott's had a character of rusticity, Wordsworth's was a face which did not assign itself to any class. It was a hardy, weather-beaten old face, which might have belonged to a nobleman, a yeoman, a mariner, or a philosopher; for there was so much of the man that you lost sight of superadded distinctions. For my own part I should not, judging by his face, have guessed him to be a poet. To my eyes there was more of strength than refinement in the face. But I think he took a different view of it himself. Whatever view he took, if occasion arose, he would be sure to disclose it; for his thoughts went naked. . . . Perhaps what was wanting was only *physical* refinement. It was a rough grey face, full of rifts and clefts and fissures, and of which, someone said, you might expect lichens to grow."

Before the end of October there came a welcome visitor to Rydal Mount in the person of the Rev. Robert Jones. Dorothy had described him in advance to Mrs. Clarkson as follows:

"In October we expect Mr. Jones, the companion of my brother forty years ago over the Alps. He looks back to that journey as the golden and sunny spot in his life. It would delight you to hear the pair talk of their adventures. My brother, active, lively, and almost as strong as ever on a mountain top; Jones, fat and roundabout and rosy, and puffing and panting while he climbs the little hill from the road to our house. Never was there a more remarkable contrast; yet time seems to have strengthened the attachment of the native of Cambrian mountains to his Cumbrian friend."

Of personal and domestic matters in 1832 there is little to record. On June 25 Wordsworth wrote from Moresby to Professor Hamilton:

"My dear sister has been languishing more than seven months in a sick-room, nor dare I or any of her friends entertain a hope that her strength will ever be restored." In the same letter he says of Coleridge: "He and my

beloved sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted, and they are now proceeding, as it were *pari passu*, along the path of sickness—I will not say towards the grave, but I trust towards a blessed immortality. It was not my intention to write so seriously; my heart is full, and you must excuse it. . . . A fortnight ago I came hither to my son and daughter, who are living a gentle, happy, quiet, and useful life together. My daughter Dora is also with us. . . . A week ago Mr. W. S. Landor, the poet and author of 'Imaginary Conversations' (which probably have fallen in your way) appeared here. We had never met before, though several letters had passed between us, and as I had not heard that he was in England, my gratification in seeing him was heightened by surprise. We passed a day together at the house of my friend Mr. Rawson, on the banks of Wast-Water. His conversation is lively and original, his learning great, though he will not allow it, and his laugh the heartiest I have heard for a long time."

To Crabb Robinson he wrote on July 21, from Rydal Mount:

"You will grieve to hear that your invalid friend, my dear sister, never quits her room but for a few minutes, and we think is always weakened by the exertion. She is, however, God be praised, in a contented and happy state of mind. . . . Yesterday I was on the top of Helvellyn with my friend Mr. Julius Hare of Trinity College, Dr. Arnold, Master of Rugby—as keen a reformer as yourself, or any other dissenting Tory. . . . Once I was upon this summit with Sir Humphry Davy and Sir Walter Scott; and many times have I trod it with my nearest and dearest relations and friends, several of whom are gone—and others going—to their last abode. But I have touched upon too melancholy a string. Life is at best but a dream, and in times of political commotion it is too often crowded with ghostly images. God preserve us all!"

The death of Scott, on September 21, deepened, and in part justified, if anything could justify, this gloom. Some compensation for the loss of old friends came with the settlement of Dr. Thomas Arnold and his family at Fox How, less than a mile from Rydal Mount.

With them was established a close intimacy, destined to last until the close of Wordsworth's life.

The prospect of living near the Wordsworths was one of the chief inducements that led to the purchase of Fox How, as may be seen from the following letter from Dr. Arnold to J. T. Coleridge from Rugby, April 5, 1832:

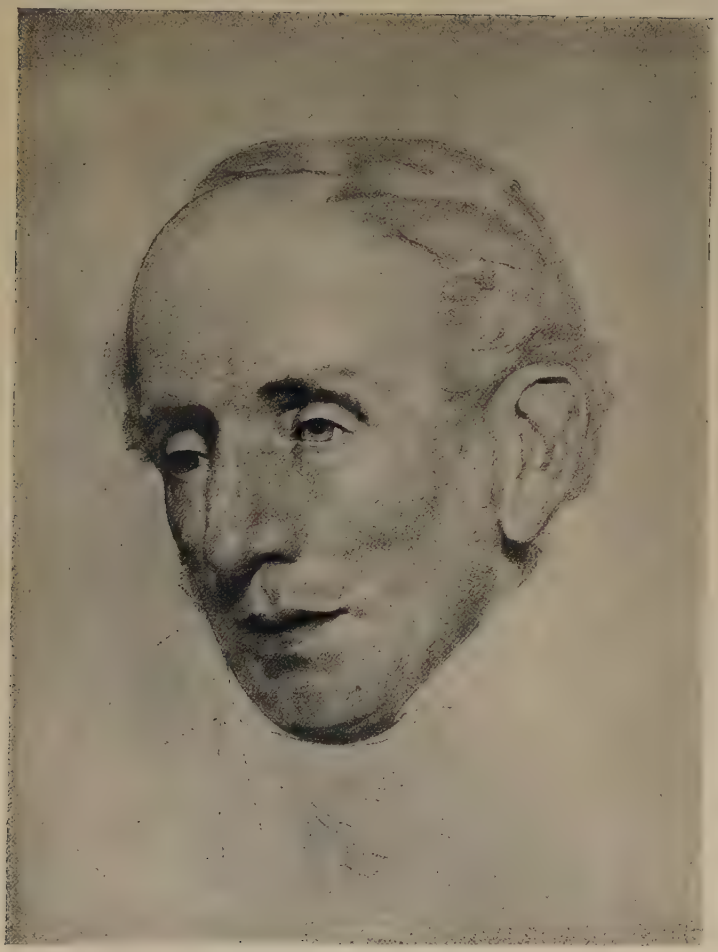
"Our intercourse with the Wordsworths was one of the brightest spots of all; nothing could exceed their friendliness, and my almost daily walks with him were things not to be forgotten. Once, and once only, we had a good fight about the Reform Bill, during a walk up Greenhead Ghyll to see 'the unfinished Sheepfold' recorded in 'Michael.' But I am sure that our political disagreement did not at all interfere with our enjoyment of each other's society; for I think that in the great principles of things we agreed very entirely, and only differed as to the *τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα*. We are thinking of buying or renting a place at Grasmere or Rydal, to spend our holidays at constantly, for not only are the Wordsworths and the scenery a very great attraction, but, etc., etc."

H. W. Pickersgill, the artist, stayed ten days at Rydal Mount this summer, and painted a portrait of Wordsworth for St. John's College, Cambridge. Dora wrote on September 27:

"Ten more pleasant days were never passed. The garret was our studio, our lowly cottage not affording a light sufficiently high for a painter in any other corner. And here we received all our company, whomsoever they might be, Mr. Pickersgill not caring how full the room was. He, too, when you know him, is a most interesting person, so completely wrapped up in his pictures. And you may well imagine how grateful we feel to him for giving us such a picture of such a father. But enough; I am forgetting that everyone cannot care about this said poet quite as much as his daughter does."

On May 30, 1833, Crabb Robinson wrote in his Diary:

"I went with Mrs. Aders to Pickersgill's, to see his portrait of Wordsworth. It is in every respect a fine picture, except that the artist has made the disease in Wordsworth's eyes too apparent. The picture wants an oculist."



WORDSWORTH IN 1832

From the drawing by Pickersgill, in the Combination Room of St. John's College, Cambridge. Reproduced with the permission of the Master and Fellows of the College.

Crabb Robinson, within whose range Carlyle and John Stuart Mill had now come, makes relatively few references to Wordsworth in 1831 and 1832. On March 24 of the latter year he wrote:

"Yesterday I had a melancholy letter from Wordsworth. He gives a sad account of his sister, and talks of leaving the country on account of the impending ruin to be apprehended from the Reform Bill!"

A close study of the Pickersgill portrait will show that Wordsworth was already an aged man. Visitors have described his healthy appearance as of one who lived in the open air, his brown skin with its ruddy glow; but his hair was thin and grey, his temples were hollow, his cheeks deeply furrowed, his chin sunken, and the light withdrawn to the depths of his eyes. Resignation rested like a sunset glow upon his face, from which almost every sign of outward-looking and aggressive courage had departed. After a life of little more than sixty years, wholesomely spent, a life successful in one of the highest and most esteemed forms of human endeavour, a life rich in domestic joys and public recognition, a life, moreover, not weakened by a single illness, this is indeed surprising. He himself attributed his rapid and premature decline to anxiety about the fate of his country. In a sense this was its cause. But the reason his anxious cares wore him down, when other men with views no less gloomy than his kept young and vigorous, lay in the passionate intensity of his nature. Upon whatever object his heart was set, this for the time engaged all his devotion, all his thought, all his strength. His entire life as a poet had been divided between two fields—nature and political speculation. The imaginative quality requisite for the fullest poetical enjoyment of nature and for the communication of this joy to others, seldom outlasts the age of forty. Speculative power, on the other hand, often increases with age for many years beyond that point. In Wordsworth's case the speculative instinct was strong; his love of country and humanity was deep. Half of his

intellectual life was devoted to politics, and as time passed it became his absorbing interest. But he had chosen a side on which there was little to inspire generous emotions and bold thoughts.

Out of the innumerable expressions of panic which might be taken from his letters between 1827 and 1832, I shall choose only a few. He imagined that the Roman Catholics, if they obtained political equality, would attempt to overthrow the Church of England and subject the State to Rome. He dreaded any enlargement of the franchise, because he foresaw that it would lead to universal suffrage, in which he discerned only evil. The thought of frequent parliaments afflicted him. The "something German" in his character, which Crabb Robinson perceived, showed itself in his habit of ordering his political judgments by very distant ends and ideals, ascertained through mere speculation. There was something French in this, too, and, let us admit, something human. But it is a habit full of danger; short-sighted practical methods are often the wisest. Not only was he drawn to these fond visions of an England ruled for ever by a benevolent aristocracy, but he was impelled by a dismal fear. "I resided," he wrote to Lord Lonsdale, "fifteen months in France, during the heat of the Revolution, and have some personal experience of the course which these movements must take, if not fearlessly resisted, before the transfer of legislative power takes place." The fear of what might happen to the Church and to the prosperity of the wealthy classes if the people gained knowledge afflicted him, and he declared that "Mechanics' Institutes make discontented spirits and insubordinate and presumptuous workmen." He opposed free and compulsory elementary education.

He was ill prepared for the wave of revolution which swept over Europe in 1830. Owing to the weakness of his eyes, he had been reading very little ("I have not opened a book for nine weeks," he wrote to Crabb Robinson about this time), and, his opinions being fixed, it was useless for anyone to present fresh facts to him

or argue with him. France he regarded as a country without religion. He deplored her equalitarian tendencies, and denounced her laws of inheritance, which have tended to a general diffusion of wealth instead of allowing it to be concentrated in the hands of a few. He was haunted with visions of what might befall England should the Reform Bill pass. A glimpse of his condition is given in a letter from his daughter, dated October 26, 1831:

"All are well, father, mother, and aunts, the first-mentioned still prophesying ruin and destruction to this hitherto flourishing spot of earth. The evil which he foresees from this dreadful Reform Bill quite weighs his spirit down."

We catch another glimpse in Dorothy's letter to Crabb Robinson dated December 1, 1831:

"If it were not for the newspapers, we should know nothing of the turbulence of our great towns and cities. Yet my poor brother is often heart-sick and almost desponding. . . . If it were not for public affairs his spirits would be as cheerful as ever."

To the Rev. J. K. Miller, a vicar in Nottinghamshire, he wrote on December 17, 1831, that his spirits were sinking under a weight of apprehension, and expressed the very comfortable opinion that piety should dispose "men who are anxious for social improvement to wait patiently for God's good time."

To Henry Taylor he wrote:

"The predominance given in Parliament to the dissenting interest, and to towns which have grown up recently, without a possibility of their being trained in habits of attachment either to the Constitution in Church and State, or what remained of the feudal frame of society in this country, will inevitably bring on a political and social revolution. What may be suffered by the existing generation no man can foresee, but the loss of liberty for a time will be the inevitable consequence. Despotism will be established, and the whole battle will have to be fought over by subsequent generations."

Amid all these whispers of panic he occasionally utters a more dignified sentiment, such as: "Means, in the concerns of this life, are infinitely more important than ends, which are to be valued mainly according to the qualities and virtues requisite for their attainment;" and again: "It has ever been the habit of my mind to trust that expediency will come out of fidelity to principles, rather than to seek my principles of action in calculations of expediency.'

Emerson visited Wordsworth August 28, 1833, and found him "a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, who laid down the law on the subject of America, of which he knew little, and talked instead of listening. Lucretius he esteems a far higher poet than Virgil, not in his system, which is nothing, but in his power of illustration." He said he thought Carlyle sometimes insane, and he abused Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister." "He had never gone farther than the first part; so disgusted was he that he threw the book across the room." He recited some of his poems. "This recitation was so unlooked for and surprising—he, the old Wordsworth, standing apart and reciting to me in a garden-walk, like a schoolboy declaiming—that I at first was near to laugh; but recollecting myself, that I had come thus far to see a poet, and he was chanting poems to me, I saw that he was right and I was wrong, and gladly gave myself up to hear." Wordsworth surprised Emerson "by the hard limits of his thought." "To judge from a single conversation, he made the impression of a narrow and very English mind." And the visitor, whose natural penetration served him, in this case, instead of knowledge of facts, and served him well, remarks: "It is not very rare to find persons, loving sympathy and ease, who expiate their departure from the common, in one direction, by their conformity in every other."

To another American visitor, the Rev. Orville Dewey, Wordsworth remarked that "although he was known to the world only as a poet, he had given twelve hours'

thought to the condition and prospects of society for one to poetry."

In the period of five years 1833-1837, Wordsworth suffered many personal losses, which he endured far more bravely than he had borne the mere thought of revolution. The death of Scott, in 1832, was followed, on July 25, 1834, by that of Coleridge. Little as the friends had seen of one another for the last twenty years, their spiritual union was of such a nature that only death could dissolve it. Wordsworth, as he wrote to Coleridge's son-in-law, dared not yield to the solemn thoughts and remembrances that pressed upon him. Charles Lamb died December 27 in the same year, and Sara Hutchinson June 25, 1835. Both were links with the glorious time of hope and freedom. Both were intimately associated with the memory of Coleridge. To Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth was indebted for faithful service as an amanuensis. She appears to have had a happy and romantic disposition. The sonnet which he dedicated to her memory gives no idea of her usefulness. It is doubtful whether he ever truly appreciated Lamb's humour or relished his honest criticism. Lamb began by speaking his mind to Wordsworth; then, seeing that this would not do, he assumed a serious and deferential tone, partly through genuine respect, but partly to avoid giving offence. It was suggested that Wordsworth should write his epitaph; but many strenuous attempts to achieve the necessary brevity and comprehensiveness failing, the lines were allowed to accumulate until there was produced the elegy "Written after the Death of Charles Lamb." In this are mentioned Lamb's drudgery as a clerk, his hard-earned independence, his love of the city, his charity, and his devotion to his sister, but one does not find here the Muses' joyous son or the learned scholar. One is glad that Wordsworth recognized the urgency of the occasion, but he failed to rise to its height. His personal feelings about Coleridge he resolutely kept hidden in his heart.

These were fatal years—Scott, Lamb, Sara Hutchin-

son, Coleridge, dead, and Dorothy Wordsworth reduced to childishness! Wordsworth between sixty and sixty-five suddenly became a lonely figure. His old friends James Losh and Fleming died in 1834, and were followed by genial Robert Jones, Felicia Hemans, and the Ettrick Shepherd, in 1835. In a little poem, composed that year, he commemorates Hogg, Scott, Coleridge, Lamb, Crabbe, and Mrs. Hemans, in lines of very variable quality, six of them and the best being dedicated to Coleridge.

Dorothy's distressing condition lay heavily upon him. At the best she was able to sit or be wheeled in the garden or take short drives, and for many weeks together she was confined to her chamber and even to her bed. At times she was painfully agitated and again had long intervals of quiet, in which she derived comfort from her flowers and the beautiful view from her window. A robin delighted her with its company, and used to perch and sing on a picture-nail in her room. Her memory was good, and she could recite many of her brother's short pieces and passages from other poets. But her sensibilities, even on the days when she felt strongest, were so delicate that the smell of flowers made her weep aloud like a child, and the sight of the shady lawn caused her to laugh with excitement. "In tenderness of heart," wrote her brother, "I do not honestly believe she was ever exceeded by any of God's creatures. Her loving-kindness has no bounds. God bless her for ever and ever."

In 1835, Wordsworth published a volume entitled "Yarrow Revisted, and Other Poems." It contained, besides many miscellaneous pieces, the "Poems composed during a Tour in Scotland, and on the English Border, in the Autumn of 1831," "Evening Voluntaries," and "Sonnets composed or suggested during a tour in Scotland in the Summer of 1833." It was published by Longman and dedicated to Samuel Rogers. Appended to the volume was a long Postscript in prose, in which the author discussed the Poor Laws, the condition of workmen in factories, and the question of

Church disestablishment, all from the conservative point of view.

The fifth collective edition of his poems began to appear in 1836, two volumes coming out that year and the remaining four in 1837. He and his household were engaged for eight months in the close work of testing new readings and correcting proof-sheets. From March 19 to August 7, 1837, he and Crabb Robinson, accompanied by Edward Moxen, the young publisher, travelled in France, Italy, Austria, and Germany. When Robinson got among Germans, with whom he liked to talk in their own language, he spent his evenings at cafés, leaving the poet to mope by himself. As Wordsworth could neither read by candle-light nor enjoy the conversation of strangers and throw himself into the life of foreign cities, it was with some relief, though none the less with gratitude to his kind and bustling companion, that he reached England on August 7. During the trip he frequently lamented that it had come too late in his life to be an effective stimulus to composition.

After a fortnight or so in London the poet went to Brinsop Court for September. Before going home he also spent a few days with Rogers at Broadstairs, and with Dr. William Howley, the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Addington Park. With the latter he took some long walks, in which they discussed the dangers which threatened the Established Church.

Robinson had spent the Christmas season at Rydal in 1835, having rooms in a cottage at the foot of the hill, beside the highroad, where he breakfasted, supped, and spent his mornings with books and his Diary. At one o'clock he dined with the Wordsworths, remaining at the Mount the rest of the afternoon or walking with members of the family. Dorothy Wordsworth greatly enjoyed his society and his letters. With Dora he had a make-believe quarrel, which went on merrily for years. Mrs. Wordsworth was grateful to him because his buoyant spirits cheered her husband. It must indeed have been salutary to the stiff conservative poet to have

with him a man who combined radical views in politics and religion with a happy disposition, strong common sense, a legal attitude, and deep religious interest. Accordingly, since Robinson, on his part, felt honoured by association with one whom, next to Goethe, he revered most of all the great men he had known, a winter visit to Rydal Mount became a regular feature of his calendar. The Arnolds had come to their new house, Fox How, in 1834, and added a delightful vigour and stir to life in the neighbourhood. Dr. Arnold's theological views were not so acceptable to Wordsworth as to his guest, but his genial, wholesome manner proved irresistible, and a lasting intimacy sprang up between the two families.

As might have been expected, the successes of Liberalism did not weaken Wordsworth's political zeal or change his opinions. His forebodings were as dismal as ever. There are probably few men living now who would seriously dispute J. R. Green's statement that "no Ministry has ever wrought greater or more beneficial changes than the Whig Ministry under Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne during its ten years of rule from 1831 to 1841;" yet Wordsworth, even though no catastrophe had yet followed the passage of the Reform Bill, could write thus in November, 1833, to Robinson:

"My opinion is that the people are bent upon the destruction of their ancient Institutions; and that nothing since, I will not say the passing, but since the broaching of the Reform Bill could or can prevent it. I would bend my endeavours to strengthen to the utmost the rational portion of the Tory party, but from no other hope than this, that the march towards destruction may be less rapid by their interposing something of a check; and the destruction of the monarchy thereby attended with less injury to social order. They are more blind than bats or moles, who cannot see that it is a change or rather an overthrow of social order, as dependent upon the present distribution of property, which is the object of the Radicals."

After a little more in this vein, Mrs. Wordsworth, who held the pen, interjected: "And I, M. W., will not write

another word on this subject!" He opposed, tooth and nail, the admission of dissenters to Cambridge University. The only reform he countenanced, except the abolition of slavery in the British colonies, was the movement in favour of international copyright. For this he really toiled, writing or dictating as many as forty letters in two or three days, in support of Serjeant Talfourd's bill. He also interested himself in efforts to build a church at Cockermouth, his native town.

He is said to have talked with much eloquence on the principles of poetry. Few written expressions on this subject have, however, come down to us from the years we are now considering. He insists, in his letters, that poetry is more of an *Art* than the world is disposed to admit, pointing out how scrupulous Milton, for example, was in his workmanship. He several times expresses regret at having written his own critical Prefaces and Supplementary Essay, and blames himself for complying with Coleridge's wishes in this particular. Being a man *integer vitæ* at every period of his life, he was honest in this, for the three things, democratic views of society, universalism in critical theory, and simplicity in poetical composition, belonged together. Having given up the first, he was bound to give up the others. With reactionary politics, he had returned to a more restricted view of the scope, purpose, and method of poetry, and in practice conformed to his theory.

In the period of five years from 1833 to 1837, Wordsworth's powers of composition were exerted fitfully. The mind of a great thinker and the hand of a cunning artist were still his. What had changed was the impulse and the method. Nothing shows more plainly than this change that personality is determined less by the degree of a man's intelligence than by the nature of his desires. Wordsworth's mind by this time, and thenceforth, was fixed upon two supreme objects—one earthly, the other heavenly. The former object was the maintenance substantially *in statu quo* of the English Church

and State. The other was life after death, in union with Christ. These two desires were the mainspring of every fresh welling up of poetry within him, and every deepening of old currents, throughout the last twenty years of his life. We may have felt impatient with him for too soon resigning himself to the idea that he was old. Had he been able to foresee that he should live to be an octogenarian, perhaps his middle years would have been full of hope and joy. At last he was really an old man, in fact as well as in feeling, and it must be admitted that he bore his years with dignity, and used to splendid advantage the great powers which were still his. But when it is said of Wordsworth that he was thus or thus, or believed in this or that, it is always necessary to ask, Which Wordsworth—he of the sunny slope, or he of the shadow?

His poetical method, his tone, his style, changed as completely as his personality. "A Wren's Nest," 1833, for example, would scarcely suggest that it was by the author of "The Sparrow's Nest," 1801.

There is much profit and delight to be had in reading these poems of Wordsworth's genuine old age. They contain no single word which is not the result of studious care. In many cases the workmanship is extremely fine and close. Occasionally, when the subject warms him, he throws back upon it a mild radiance like the tempered light of a wintry sun. With manifest sincerity he finds a way of expressing in season and out of season his rather narrow and colourless piety. At all costs he will do this; it is now a main purpose of his life. We can only wish the religion of his old age had been more generous and comprehensive, more like that of his youth. A fine example of his later manner is the grave and pensive poem, beginning, "The sun is couched, the sea-fowl gone to rest."

His tour with his son John and Henry Crabb Robinson, in the Isle of Man and in Scotland, in the autumn of 1833, took him out of himself to some extent, and encouraged him to direct his thoughts upon external nature. But the time has passed when he could submit

unreservedly to her influence. He must now use her as an object of meditation, or as a servant of abstract thought. He stands detached from her, no longer ranging freely with her, hand in hand. She is alienated, even suspect. His heart is fixed upon another country and other loves. It is very sad and discouraging to see a great poet turning away as if in reprobation from a pure love that never played him false. Of the forty-eight pieces composed or suggested during the tour, one, the sonnet "In Sight of the Town of Cockermouth," is deservedly very famous, and somewhat reconciles us to the ever-recurrent topic of the grave. In the "Stanzas suggested in a Steam-boat off Saint Bees' Heads, on the Coast of Cumberland," and the sonnets "In the Channel, between the Coast of Cumberland and the Isle of Man," and "At Sea off the Isle of Man," he utters a futile and melancholy protest against progress, reason, and science, on the assumption that these forces are at enmity with imagination's finer ministry. This becomes a persistent note in his poetry. On lips less restrained than his it rose to an unmeaning shriek. Wordsworth's notion of the simple and the meek,

> Blest in their pious ignorance, though weak
> To cope with Sages undevoutly free,

shows that he had fallen into a new kind of panic. Moreover, when he repeatedly exalts mediæval Christianity and refers to the Reformation with a slight shudder, and when he even apologizes for the "bold credulities" of the past, we realize that the same repulsion which produced the Oxford Movement was at work in him. The earlier note, of political Toryism, corresponding to this new note of religious reaction, is struck more violently than ever in the sonnet entitled "Lowther":

> Hourly the democratic torrent swells;
> For airy promises and hopes suborned
> The strength of backward-looking thoughts is scorned.
> Fall if ye must, ye Towers and Pinnacles,
> With what ye symbolize; authentic Story
> Will say, Ye disappeared with England's Glory!

Nearly all the poems assigned to 1835 were called forth by the deaths or misfortunes of the poet's friends, the most noteworthy being the lines to Charles Lamb and those to the Ettrick Shepherd, already mentioned. He appears to have composed no verse, or very little, in 1836. In the following year his visit to Italy stirred him to considerable productiveness. Of the twenty-eight poems directly connected with the tour, the most valuable are certainly the "Musings near Aquapendente" and the six sonnets on Italian liberty with which the series closes. One sentence in the "Musings" came from a deep place in Wordsworth's experience. He had been realizing that his gift of poetic vision and of song was dwindling from disuse, and in self-reproach he said:

> Who would keep
> Power must resolve to cleave to it through life,
> Else it deserts him, surely as he lives.

In this piece the note of despondency is heard again; the times are said to be "vexed and disordered," science is reproached, and a plea is made for mystical faith. Much of what seems distinctive in the writings of Newman or most impressive in the works of Carlyle was already to be found in the last hundred lines of Wordsworth's poem. That he was aware of the effect they might produce, as being favourable to the Oxford Movement, and desired rather than deprecated that effect, is seen in the note composed by him conjointly with Frederick W. Faber. And in the Fenwick note he says of the Tractarian leaders: "Much of the work they are undertaking was grievously wanted, and may God grant their endeavours may continue to prosper as they have done."

Before he reached his sixty-eighth year, Wordsworth had won as much renown as it is possible for a lofty thinker and sincere artist to obtain from his own generation. Reprints and fresh editions of his works followed one another rapidly. He was widely read in Britain and America. His influence extended through all ranks of society. Many of his poems were recognized as English classics. The number of his lines which had

already become familiar quotations is astonishingly large. The principles of his art were still a matter of lively controversy, and he was acclaimed by men of quite opposite views as the champion of causes to which they were attached. In general, however, the tendency of his more recent work, and the well-known character of his later opinions, made it impossible for the public to understand the meaning and purpose of his earlier poems. It was taken for granted that the same man had written "Lyrical Ballads" and "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." "The Prelude" was still unprinted. The existence of such a document as the Letter to Bishop Watson was not even suspected. Only a small and dwindling band of intimate friends could possibly interpret aright the works of his prime.

A picture of Wordsworth's life in the winter of 1838-39 will suffice for most of the years that followed. Crabb Robinson was making one of his long annual visits, which always cheered the entire household. Except when their sturdy neighbour Dr. Thomas Arnold was present, he tried to refrain from political and religious discussion with the poet, but as Dr. Arnold often joined the circle, the Oxford Movement was debated in the intervals of whist. The doctor did not like the "Oxford tract men," while Wordsworth was rather favourable to them. Miss Isabella Fenwick, a lady of fortune, about ten years younger than Mrs. Wordsworth and an ardent admirer of the poet and sympathizer with his present views of society, had taken a cottage at Ambleside about a mile from Rydal. He was wont to stride over to see her on dark rainy afternoons, to avoid the crowd of company at home—sometimes as many as twenty or thirty visitors in a day—and to read, or rather recite, portions of "The Prelude," which he was then once more revising, so as to leave it in a state fit for publication. Sir Henry Taylor, who was a family connexion of hers, says in his "Autobiography" that her influence over Wordsworth was at this time invaluable, because she persuaded him to consent to Dora's marriage, which he had for a long time passionately

opposed. Harriet Martineau, who also lived at Ambleside and was less disposed to worship the poet, said: "Wordsworth goes every day to Miss Fenwick, gives her a smacking kiss, and sits down before her fire to open his mind. Think what she could tell if she survives him! His conversation can never be anticipated. Sometimes he is annoying, from the pertinacity with which he dwells on trifles; at other times he flows on in the utmost grandeur, leaving a strong impression of inspiration." It was in 1843 that he dictated to Miss Fenwick those notes that are at once so valuable and so misleading. They are often incorrect, interpreting the poems of his early and middle years from the standpoint of an old man who half disapproves of what he then wrote. They consist largely of anecdotes connected with the places in which his poems were composed or the incidents that called them forth. Many of the dates are incorrectly given. In October, 1840, Miss Fenwick took up her residence with the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount.

Wordsworth's appearance at Oxford in the summer of 1839 to receive the degree of D.C.L. was the occasion of an enthusiastic reception. He was presented for the degree by the professor of poetry, the Rev. John Keble, whose address shows that the honour was given to Wordsworth with peculiar emphasis upon his character as a *religious* poet.

Of this occasion Dr. Arnold wrote:

> "I went up to Oxford to the Commemoration for the first time for twenty-one years, to see Wordsworth and Bunsen receive their degrees; and to me, remembering how old Coleridge inoculated a little knot of us with the love of Wordsworth, when his name was in general a byword, it was striking to witness the thunders of applause, repeated over and over again, with which he was greeted in the theatre by undergraduates and Masters of Arts alike."

In April, 1841, the poet was in London for a short while, and later, with Miss Fenwick, Mrs. Wordsworth, his daughter, and his niece, he visited the south-west

of England. They went over the once to him familiar ground of the Wye Valley, and the scenes of many of his early poems, Goodrich Castle, Tintern, and Alfoxden. Poole had died September 8, 1837. Bristol and Bath were included in this tour, and in the latter city, on May 11, 1841, Dora Wordsworth and Edward Quillinan were married.

The last ten years of Wordsworth's life brought him honours and fame, but though his body retained its hard seasoned vigour, his intensely brooding mind fed upon vain fears, and also, it is true, substantial griefs. On his visits to London he became acquainted with many of the most eminent persons of that time, sitting, as Carlyle records, "with rock-like indifference to the babble," at dinner parties, his face bearing "marks of much, not always peaceful, meditation," his eyes showing "a quiet clearness"—"a right good old steel-grey figure, with a fine rustic simplicity and dignity about him, and a veracious *strength* looking through him." At home he was surrounded by a family group who loved and understood him, and by an outer circle of those whom Harriet Martineau described as his blue-stocking and clerical admirers, who regarded him as a combination of philosopher and saint, and manifestly did *not* understand him. To them we owe a burdensome debt for many anecdotes and pen-portraits which misrepresent him as poet and, I believe, as man. Several of the paintings and drawings of him in middle life and old age are atrocious. When compared with the true portraits by Nash and Pickersgill, they are clearly seen to be merely conventional, the artists' ideas of what a pious old gentleman, who was also a poet, should look like. Among the worst are those by Boxall, Haydon, and Margaret Gillies. They still figure as frontispieces in editions of his works, to the enjoyment of which they operate with deterrent force.

In 1842 he resigned the office of stamp distributor, thus losing more than half his income. The deficiency was nearly made up, however, by a pension of £300 on the Civil List. When Southey died, in 1843, Words-

worth was made Poet Laureate. He continued revising his works and occasionally composing new poems. Though lacking in charm, and often almost ridiculous because of their frightened reactionary tone, most of these are remarkable as evidences of unfailing artistic skill, stubborn strength of character, and intellectual energy.

The greatest affliction of his life fell upon him in 1847, when he lost his beloved daughter Dora. From this blow he never recovered. It broke his heart. He sank into a melancholy, distressing to those about him, from which he appeared to make no efforts to extricate himself.

Emerson, in "English Traits," describes Wordsworth as he saw him in March, 1848:

"His face sometimes lighted up, but his conversation was not marked by special force or elevation. Yet perhaps it is a high compliment to the cultivation of the English generally when we find such a man not distinguished. He had a healthy look, with a weather-beaten face, his face corrugated, especially the large nose. Miss Martineau, who lived near him, praised him to me not for his poetry, but for thrift and economy; for having afforded to his country neighbours an example of a modest household, where comfort and culture were secured without any display. She said that, in his early housekeeping at the cottage where he first lived, he was accustomed to offer his friends bread and plainest fare; if they wanted anything more, they must pay him for their board. It was the rule of the house. I replied that it evinced English pluck more than any anecdote I knew."

Admirable as such sense and courage are, it is only fair to say that the Wordsworths were always hospitable, up to and even beyond their means. Dove Cottage was at times so crowded that rooms had to be found outside for guests. And furthermore, as Dorothy once wrote to Mrs. Clarkson, in the midst of a grand upheaval at Allan Bank, William was "not expected to do anything." If Emerson's anecdote be true, the credit belongs to her

GRASMERE CHURCH

From a photograph by Walmsley

and Mrs. Wordsworth, even more than to the head of the family.

Emerson, like everybody else, found the aged poet craggy in his judgments. He said no Scotchman could write English. He thought Tennyson "a right poetic genius, though with some affectation"; which in 1848 was as much as could be said, and was bravely spoken.

On January 6, 1849, Hartley Coleridge died. Robinson truly said, and the testimony of persons still living confirms his words, "Everybody in the valley pitied and loved him." His father's venerable friend braved the inclemency of the season to stand beside his open grave.

Writing to Miss Fenwick, who was no longer at Rydal Mount, Robinson gives an account of his visit:

"I found Mr. Wordsworth more calm and composed than I expected. Whatever his feelings may be, he appears to have them under control. I feared that the visit to the churchyard last Tuesday with Mr. Coleridge [Derwent], to fix the spot where Hartley might be interred, would overset him; but, on the contrary, I returned with him alone, and he talked with perfect self-possession. Dear Mrs. Wordsworth is what she always was: I see no change on her, but that the wrinkles of her careworn countenance are somewhat deeper. Poor Miss Wordsworth, I thought sunk still further in insensibility. By-the-by, Mrs. Wordsworth says that almost the only enjoyment Wordsworth seems to feel is in his attendance on her, and that her death would be to him a sad calamity."

Quillinan wrote to Robinson, October 14, 1849:

"You will find your old and faithful friend, the poet, pretty much as he was on your last visit. The same social cheerfulness—company cheerfulness—the same fixed despondency, uncorrected. I esteem him for both; I love him best for the latter.

In the summer of 1849 Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth made the last of their many journeys together, going to visit her brother Thomas at West Malvern. In this year and the next appeared a six-volume edition of the Poems, embodying Wordsworth's own final revision,

which had cost him much labour, some of it not well spent; for his later corrections were often unfortunate.

In a letter dated April 12, 1850, Robinson writes: "The accounts from Rydal are alarming. I fear that the great poet is approaching to what will be the commencement of his fame." Up to March 12 Wordsworth had continued in good health, but on that date he took a cold, which developed into an inflammation of the pleura and the bronchial tubes. By the 20th his illness was recognized as very serious. On Sunday, April 7, his eightieth birthday, prayers were offered for him in Rydal Chapel. On Saturday, April 20, he received the Communion at the hands of his son John. His nephew, in the "Memoirs," records an incident touching in its naturalness: "On or about this day, Mrs. Wordsworth, with a view of letting him know what the opinion of his medical advisers was concerning his case, said gently to him: 'William, you are going to Dora.' He made no reply at the time, and the words seemed to have passed unheeded; indeed, it was not certain that they had ever been heard. More than twenty-four hours afterwards one of his nieces came into the room, and was drawing aside the curtain of his chamber, and then, as if awakening from a quiet sleep, he said, 'Is that Dora?'" While the clock was striking the hour of noon, on Tuesday, April 23, 1850, he passed calmly away.

I once heard from the lips of Miss Arnold, of Fox How, an account of that morning. "My younger sister and I," she said, "went up on the terrace of Loughrigg, and watched the windows of Rydal Mount opposite; and when the curtains were drawn down we knew Wordsworth was dead." She was one of the large number of friends and neighbours who attended the funeral, which was on Saturday, the 27th. The body was laid to rest beside the Rothay, in Grasmere churchyard.

Dorothy Wordsworth and Mrs. Wordsworth spent their remaining years at Rydal Mount, the former never recovering her mental health, the latter strong and serene to the last. Dorothy died January 25, 1855, and

Mrs. Wordsworth, January 17, 1859. Their bodies lie in the same corner of Grasmere churchyard with those of their brother and husband and of Dora Quillinan, Hartley Coleridge, the two children Thomas and Catherine, and Sara Hutchinson. There, too, stands a stone in memory of the sailor brother John.

Wordsworth's fame spread slowly during his lifetime. Since his death it has increased with sound and constant growth. His appreciative readers were confined at first to the small circle of persons who knew him or were acquainted with his purposes. Upon them the force of his character operated almost as much as the charm of his poetry. Then the best lovers of literature in the English-speaking world began to appreciate the exalted quality of his verse and the fineness of his feeling; many of the strongest minds, statesmen, philosophers, men of science, perceived and valued the truth of his report about nature and the human heart; influential critics proclaimed him the greatest poet of his age, great in the purity and elevation of his work, and no less in the peculiarly poetic view which he took of the world.

For a time this last quality of his writings was the most generally understood. Men spoke of the Wordsworthian attitude, the Wordsworthian conception of nature, and his many-sidedness was not sufficiently acknowledged. But as "The Prelude" became better known, and after the "Fragment of the Recluse" appeared, unexpected depths were revealed, his intellectual complexity and power were more fully realized, and he was thought of as something more than the simple poet of quiet nature.

His unique position as interpreting, through personal experience, one of the most tremendous political changes in history has only begun to be recognized. The French Revolution itself is coming to be more sympathetically understood, and Wordsworth's attitude to the Revolution is seen in a truer light.

During the Great War English-speaking people

throughout the world turned to him more than to any other poet for the quiet power that overcomes evil, for encouragement, and for respite from the strain and agony. Statesmen strengthened their hearts to bear the burdens of each day by repeating the high counsels of his patriotic sonnets; and men and women who were risking or giving all at the bidding of Duty uttered his words:

> Stern Lawgiver, yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face.

That Wordsworth gives serenity to those who love him is true, but he never found the way to peace himself. His soul was never at rest. He was always consumed with passionate joy or passionate distress. He will be venerated for the honesty of his work and the height of his ideals as long as our English tongue endures. He dealt seriously with poetry, honouring himself and humankind.

INDEX

ADDRESSES to the freeholders of Westmorland, 549
"Affliction of Margaret, The," date of, 409
Alfoxden, described by Dorothy, 238
leased by Wordsworth, 239
trouble about the lease, 247
Allan Bank, 487
Analytical Review, The, 154
"Ancient Mariner, The," origin of, 255
"an injury" to "Lyrical Ballads," 294, 296
"Anecdote for Fathers," 201
"Anima Poetæ," 405, 406
Annette. *See* Vallon
Anti-Jacobin, The, attacks the poets, 277
Arnold, Miss, 610
Arnold, Dr. Thomas, of Rugby, 591, 605, 506

Baillie, Joanna, Wordsworth's opinion of, 501
Bassigny regiment, 107, 117
Baudouin, Eustace, brother of Martin, 507, 513
Baudouin, Madame. *See* Wordsworth, Caroline
Baudouin, Martin, husband of Caroline, 507, 513
Beatty, Arthur, vii
Beaumont, Sir George and Lady, 404, 425, 429, 454, 580
Beaupuy, Michel-Armand:
his biography, vii
a descendant of Montaigne, 110
a captain at Blois, 110
influence on Wordsworth, 111-120
described in "The Prelude," 111
addresses Revolutionary club at Blois, 117
false report of his death, 119
dies general of division, 119
recalled in "The Happy Warrior," 444
Bergson, Henri, 521
"Biographia Literaria," 384, 546
"Birth of Love, The," 225
Blackwood's Magazine, 541, 546, 561
Blake, William, converses about Wordsworth, 579
Blois, 92, 93, 97-122
letters from, 98, 121, 217
revolutionary club at, 103-105, 116-118
Blumenbach of Göttingen, 286
"Borderers, The," 179, 195, 252-254
Bowles, William, 131
Brissat, Girondist leader, 125
Bristol, 203, 221
"Brothers, The," 310, 314
Brougham Castle, Song at the Feast of, 440, 444
Burke, Edmund, 69, 158
Burns, Robert, Wordsworth's tribute to, 396
Wordsworth's "Letter to a Friend of," 540
Bussière, joint author of "Le Général Michel Beaupuy," vii
Byron, Lord, his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," 462

Caird, Edward, 88
Calais, Wordsworth's sojourn at, 374-376
Calvert, Raisley, 176
Wordsworth nurses him, 177
leaves Wordsworth a legacy, 177, 178, 202
Calvert, William, 143, 145, 146, 151, 167, 176, 364, 498
Cambridge, 30-40, 50-55
Wordsworth matriculates, 30
intellectual life at, 31
Wordsworth's aloofness at, 33
becomes adapted to, 35
his discontent with, 37-39
his dream of a reformed university, 38
compulsory chapel, 38
first summer vacation, 40
second summer vacation, 52
third summer vacation, 56
great predecessors, 56
graduation, 66
Campbell, J. Dykes, 204, 205, 221, 310, 315

Cannonian, The, a discussion club, 192, 214
Carlyle, Thomas, anecdote about Wordsworth, 152
description of Wordsworth, 607
Carlyon, Clement, 285, 286, 289
Carter, John, Wordsworth's clerk, 503
Cestre, Charles, biographer of Thelwall, 241
Chester, John, 279, 286
Clarkson, Thomas, and Mrs. (born Catherine Buck), vii, 361, 366, 371, 373, 426
Cockermouth, Wordsworth's birthplace, 13
Coleorton, 422-426
Coleridge, Derwent, grieves for his father, 496
Coleridge, Ernest Hartley, editor of his grandfather's letters, vii, 222
Coleridge, Hartley, born, 228
Wordsworth's poem to, 389
grieves for his father, 496
keeps a school at Ambleside, 570
the Wordsworths' care for him, 587
his death, 609
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, his notebooks, vii
J. Dykes Campbell's Life of, 204, 205, 221, 310, 315
boyhood freedom in reading, 28
undergraduate at Cambridge, reads Wordsworth's early poems, 131
Godwin's tribute to, 161
first meeting with Godwin, 192
connection with Pantisocracy, 195
first meeting with Wordsworth, 204, 209
visits him at Racedown, 221
publishes *The Watchman*, 220, 228, 230, 294
describes Dorothy Wordsworth, 235
calls Wordsworth "a semi-atheist," 220, 243
praises Wordsworth, 222, 228, 238, 274, 310
feels himself a little man beside Wordsworth, 222
his marriage, October 4, 1795, to Sara Fricker, 228
publishes "Poems on Various Subjects," 228
begins taking opium, 229
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, visits Tom Poole at Stowey, 229
his radicalism shocks people at Stowey, 229
preaches in Unitarian churches, 229, 259, 266
writes "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison," 236
writes "Fears in Solitude," and "France," 258
goes to Germany, 279
sends hexameter lines to William and Dorothy Wordsworth from Göttingen, 285
his contributions to "Lyrical Ballads," 383
"Biographia Literaria," 384, 546
separates from the Wordsworths in Scotland, 395, 399-401
Wordsworth lends him money, 406
goes to Malta, 407
returns from Malta, 421
loses manuscript of Wordsworth's poems, 421
Wordsworth reads "The Prelude" to him, 424
unhappy with his wife, 424
appears after 1807 as champion of orthodoxy, 456
publishes *The Friend*, 488
misunderstanding between him and the Wordsworths, 495-500
dissatisfied with "The Excursion," 527
recoils from the sensational psychology, 529
his death, 597
Coleridge, Mrs. (born Sarah Fricker), 205, 208, 209, 228, 234, 236, 368
"Convention of Cintra, The," 490
"Convict, The," 195, 225
Cookson, Christopher Crackanthorpe, the poet's uncle, 16, 46, 55
Cookson, Dorothy, the poet's maternal grandmother, 13, 16, 44, 47
Cookson, Mrs. (born Cowper), wife of the poet's uncle, Rev. William Cookson, 48, 49
Cookson, William, maternal grandfather of the poet, 13, 16
Cookson, Rev. William, the poet's uncle, 30, 48, 49, 145
Cottle, Joseph, 204, 208, 221, 222
anecdotes about Wordsworth in Somerset, 250

Cottle, Joseph, visits Wordsworth and agrees to publish "Lyrical Ballads," 274
transfers copyright of "Lyrical Ballads," 293, 295
Crackenthorpe, Mrs., the poet's aunt, 168
Critical Review, The, 294

"Daffodils, The," 367
Darwin, Erasmus, 131
Davy, Sir Humphry, 311, 324, 329, 426
Davy, Mrs. John, manuscript "Memories of William Wordsworth," 315
"Dejection, an Ode," 368, 380-383
Deppermann family at Goslar, 282
De Quincey, Thomas, 389, 478
describes the Wordsworths, 479, 487, 489
"Descriptive Sketches," 58-62, 120
Dorothy's opinion of, 129
criticism of, 136-140
unfavourably received, 160
Dewey, Rev. Orville, visits Wordsworth, 596
"Dion," 113, 541
Dove Cottage, or Town-end, description of, 306-308
"Duddon, The River," 564, 565
Duty, Ode to, 25, 413, 440, 453

"Ecclesiastic Sonnets," 573
Eclectic Review, The, 531
Edinburgh Review, The, 458, 461, 462
attacks "Biographia Literaria," 546
attacks "The Excursion," 530
Eichhorn, Göttingen professor, 287
"Elegiac Stanzas" ["Peele Castle"], 413, 453
marks the central point in Wordsworth's career, 453
Emerson, R. W., visits Wordsworth, 596
describes Wordsworth, 608
"Epitaphs, Upon," 493
Erskine, Thomas, 165
"Essay Supplementary" to Poems of, 1815, 534
Eusemere, home of the Clarksons, 326, 367
"Evening Walk, An," Dorothy's opinion of, 130
criticism of, 132-136
unfavourable reception of, 160
Examiner, The, 436, 530, 552, 562
"Excursion, The," characters in, 22
autobiographical value, 127
a commentary on the Revolution, 127, 524
"Excursion, The," plan of, 301, 515
publication of, 514
relation to "The Prelude" and "Recluse," 514
philosophical doctrine in, 517
reception of, 525
Coleridge disappointed in, 527
Jeffrey's judgment of, 527
Southey's judgment of, 527

Fawcett, Rev. Joseph, 188-194, 522
"Female Vagrant, The," 160, 198
Fenwick, Isabella, viii, 116, 605, 606
Fitzgerald, Lord Edward, 96
Flaxman, John, 527, 532
Forncett Rectory, 49, 50, 72, 74, 76
Fox, Charles James, 329, 331, 438
Fricker, the Misses, 205-208, 227, 228
Friend, The, 279, 488, 489, 493

Gallow Hill, farm of the Hutchinsons, 373
"Gandyverse," Coleridge's name for false poetic diction, 324
Gelet du Vivier, Wordsworth's landlord at Orleans, 93, 96
Gentleman's Magazine, The, 159
Gifford, William, 526
Godwin, William, acquainted early with Wordsworth, 154
Wordsworth his disciple, 181
his philosophical system, 182-187
influence on other thinkers, 187
his first meeting with Coleridge, 192
Wordsworth receives his "Political Justice," 214
subscription for him, 573
Goethe, in France with invading army, 121
compared with Wordsworth, 333
Gorsas, Girondist deputy, executed, 151, 152
Goslar, Wordsworth at, 282-285
Göttingen, Coleridge's life there, 283
Wordsworth and Dorothy at, 285, 293
Grasmere, Wordsworth and Dorothy settle at, 304-307
Grattan, Thomas Colley, describes Wordsworth and Coleridge, 282
Green, George and Sarah, 484
Green, English student at Göttingen, 286
"Guide to the Lakes," 493, 494
"Guilt and Sorrow," 147, 160-163, 195, 197-199, 203

Halifax, the town, 44, 46, 50, 72, 75
"Happy Warrior, Character of the," 414, 440, 442
refers in part to Beaupuy, 111
Hardy, Thomas, revolutionary agitator, 165, 166
Hare, Julius, 591
Hawkshead, 16-30
Haydon, R. B., 527, 536
his immortal dinner, 544
his picture of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, 544 *n.*
Hazlitt, William, his description of Fawcett, 193
visits and describes Wordsworth, 265-269
Coleridge's opinion of, 405
paints portraits of Wordsworth and Coleridge, 430
reviews "The Excursion," 530
accuses Wordsworth of apostasy, 536
attacks Coleridge in *The Edinburgh Review*, 546
Hogg, James, the Ettrick Shepherd, 506, 598
Holcroft, Thomas, radical and dramatist, 165, 189, 214
Hunt, Leigh, 527, 536, 552
Hutchinson family at Sockburn, 299, 320, 377
Hutchinson, Joanna, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, 299, 316
Hutchinson, Mary. *See* Mrs. Wordsworth
Hutchinson, Sara, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, 299, 328, 359, 368, 477, 478, 484, 485, 490, 597
Hutchinson, Thomas, editor of the Oxford "Wordsworth," 104, 131, 326, 409

"Intimations of Immortality," Ode, 366, 440, 445-451
Isola, Agostino, teaches Wordsworth Italian, 39, 439

Jacobins, The, 150
"Jacobins," the English, Wordsworth's close connection with, 194
Jeffrey, Francis, 458-463
his review of "The Excursion," 526
Jekyll, Joseph, 93, 104, 115
Johnson, Joseph, publishes works of the radical group, 153
publishes Wordsworth's early volumes, 153
gives dinners to the Godwin circle, 193
Jones, Rev. Robert, 57, 58, 72, 590, 598

Keats, John, at Haydon's immortal dinner, 544
his portrait in Haydon's great picture, 544
calls on Wordsworth in London, 545
at Rydal, 551
refers to Wordsworth in a sonnet, 551
refers to Wordsworth in letters, 552
Knight, William, his "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," vii, 54, 368
Kingston, commissioner of stamps, 545
Klopstock, Friedrich Gottlieb, 280

Lake School of Poets, absurdity of the phrase, 458
Lamb, Charles and Mary, vii
he protests against Wordsworth's altering a line, 180
he visits Coleridge at Nether Stowey, 235-237
he makes fun of Coleridge's omniscience, 276
her insanity, 235
they visit the Lake country, 376
her poem about Coleridge, 418
they are temporarily estranged from the Wordsworths, 496
he reviews "The Excursion," 526, 531
his death, 597
Landor, Walter Savage, meets Wordsworth, 591
"Laodamia," its composition, 505
Charles Lamb's opinion of, 505
its biographical significance, 506
"Leech Gatherer, The" ("Resolution and Independence"), 322, 369, 370, 383
Legouis, Emile, vii, viii, 132, 137, 151, 225, 227, 569
Lincoln, Bishop of. *See* Christopher Wordsworth
Liswyn Farm, 249
Llandaff, Bishop of. *See* Richard Watson
Lloyd, Charles, 228, 229, 235, 258, 321, 326
Lockhart, J. G., 397, 588
London Magazine, The, 571
Losh, James, 275
"Louisa," a poem, 169, 170
Lovell, Robert, 193, 194, 196, 207, 208
Lowther, Sir James, afterwards first Earl of Londsale, 13, 16, 45, 46, 55, 81

Lowther, Lady Mary, album of poetry made for her by Wordsworth and Sara Hutchinson, 563, 564
Lowther, Lord, second Earl of Lonsdale, 376, 429, 548, 549
Lucas, E. N., vii, 277
"Lucy Gray," 290
"Lucy Poems," 43, 59, 291
Lynton, the walk to, 255
"Lyrical Ballads," Coleridge's contributions to, 255
publication of, 275
contents of, 279
unfavourable reception of, 294-298
preface to, 318, 321

Mackintosh, Sir James, author of "Vindiciæ Gallicæ," 192
Marshall, Mrs., born Jane Pollard, vii, 44-49, 53-55
Martineau, Harriet, 379, 606, 607
"Mathetes," Wordsworth's answer to, 493
Mathews, Charles, the comedian, 72, 73
his relations with his brother William, 175
Matthews, William, 72, 80, 98, 166, 167, 171, 214
"Memoirs of William Wordsworth," by his nephew Christopher, Bishop of Lincoln, vii, 366
"Memorials of a Tour on the Continent," 573, 575
"Michael," the poem, 323
Michael Angelo's sonnets, Wordsworth's efforts to translate, 420
Mill, John Stuart, saved from despair by reading Wordsworth, 585
visits Wordsworth, 586
Milton, Wordsworth's acknowledged master, 12, 491
Monkhouse, Mr. and Mrs., 597
Montagu, Basil, 193, 201, 214, 221, 300, 303, 376, 477, 495
Montagu, Edward, the boy called "Basil," 201
Montaigne, Michel de, ancestor of Beaupuy, 110
Montgomery, James, criticizes Wordsworth, 531
Monthly Review, The, 297
Morley, John, 79, 554

Napoleon, sonnets against, 371, 375
Nether Stowey, 229, 230
Nicholson, link between Wordsworth and Godwin, 192, 193

"Night-Piece, A," 264
"North, Christopher." *See* John Wilson

"Old Cumberland Beggar, The," original of, 22
Order of Wordsworth's poems, 578
Orleans, 79, 91-97, 120, 126
letter from, 93
Oxford Movement, Wordsworth's sympathy with, 603-605
bestows honorary degree on Wordsworth, 606

Paine, Thomas, 96, 154, 159, 193, 231, 353
Palmer, Professor George Herbert, 120
Pantheism, Wordsworth's, 466-469
Pantisocracy, 193, 195-197, 205-209
Paris, 92, 93, 122, 150, 507-513, 568-570
Park House, home of Tom and Sara Hutchinson on Ullswater, 411
Parry, the brothers, English students at Göttingen, 286
"Pedlar, The," early name for "The Excursion," 22
Penrith, 13, 16, 43, 44-49, 50, 52
"Peter Bell," 25, 264, 317, 558-563
Dorothy copies two versions of the Prologue to, 559
parodies on, 561
Pickersgill, H. W., paints portrait of Wordsworth, 592
Pinney family, of Bristol, 200-203, 210, 213
Poincaré, Henri, 524
Pollard, Jane (*see* Mrs. Marshall), her marriage, 200
Poole, Thomas, 205, 206, 221, 227, 229, 230, 231, 353, 426, 607
Prefaces to "Lyrical Ballads," 334-346
Coleridge's comments on, 384-387
"Prelude, The," variorum edition by Professor de Selincourt, vii
describes life at Hawkshead, 20-29, 40-43
passages composed in Germany, 289
composition of the first two books, 310
the poem an expression of joy, 413
Wordsworth reads it to Coleridge, 424
much altered in revision, 452
why withheld from publication, 453

"Prelude, The," its purpose explained in preface to "The Excursion," 464
its deeper meaning, 465-471
Price, Rev. Richard, 69, 96, 159
Priestley, Dr. Joseph, 96, 153, 159, 196, 197
Poems in six volumes published in 1849, 609

Quarterly Review, The, prints mangled form of Lamb's review of "The Excursion," 526, 531
Quillinan, Edward, husband of Dora Wordsworth, 581

Racedown, 200, 209, 221, 223, 224
Ratzeburg, 281
Rawson, Mrs., 200
"Recluse, The," 301, 310, 352, 415
"Recollections of a Tour in Scotland," by Dorothy Wordsworth, 391-396
"Resolution and Independence." *See* "Leech Gatherer"
"River Duddon, The," 564, 565
Robinson, Henry Crabb, his manuscripts, vii
on "She was a Phantom of Delight," 379
Dorothy disposed to like him, 483
his early life, 483 *n.*
first meeting with Wordsworth, 485
describes Coleridge's behaviour in London, 497
on Wordsworth's political sentiments, 501
opinion of "The Excursion," 527
predicts Wordsworth's intellectual "death," 577
annual Christmas visits to the Wordsworths, 606-609
Rock of Names, 369
Rogers, Samuel, meets Coleridge and the Wordsworths on their Scottish tour, 395
Rosengarten, J. G., 197
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 21, 42, 84-88, 101
"Ruined Cottage, The," an early poem embedded in "The Excursion," 244, 290
Russell, Bertrand, 521
"Ruth," 171, 289
Rydal Mount, removal to, 503

St. Albyn family, owners of Alfoxden, 239, 246
Sandford, Mrs., editor of "Thomas Poole and his Friends," vii, 227, 229, 231, 240, 248
Scotland, tour in, 391-403
Wordsworth revisits, with Dora, 587-590
Scott, Sir Walter, receives visit from William and Dorothy Wordsworth, 397-399
visits Wordsworth at Grasmere, 427
his conservatism affects Wordsworth, 454
Wordsworth's last sight of, 587
Wordsworth's farewell sonnet to, 589
his death, 597
Selincourt, Ernest de, vii, 32, 254, 452
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, resides at Keswick, 497
admires Wordsworth's poetry, 498
discusses Wordsworth's politics, 554
writes "Peter Bell the Third," 562
"She was a Phantom of Delight," 379, 405
Shuter, W., his portrait of Wordsworth, 266
Siddons, Mrs., 189
Simpson family at Wythburn, 319, 326
Smith, Charlotte, 94, 96
Smith, Nowell C., 369
Smith, Sir Robert, 96
Sockburn, 50, 293
"Solitary Reaper, The," 401, 419
"Somersetshire Tragedy," poem of Wordsworth destroyed by Knight, 269
Southey, Robert, his connection with Pantisocracy, 195, 205-209
marries Edith Fricker, 227
shocks Poole's cousin, 229
reviews "Lyrical Ballads" severely, 294
coupled with Wordsworth by Jeffrey, 458
praises "The Excursion," 527
his death, 607
Spy sent by Government to watch Wordsworth and Coleridge, 246, 249
Susquehanna, French settlement on its banks, 196

Taylor, Sir Henry, 589, 605
Taylor, William, master of Hawkshead School, original of "Matthew," 18

Thelwall, John, agitator and poet, charged with high treason, 165
visits the Wordsworths at Alfoxden, 240
anecdote concerning, 241
Cestre's Life of, 241 *n.*
persecuted, 242
his poetry, 243
shocks people in Somerset, 244-246
Coleridge's opinion of, 249
the poets visit his farm, 265
"This Lime-tree Bower my Prison," 236
"Thorn, The," 264
"Three Years she grew in Sun and Shower," 171
"Tinker, The," 369
"Tintern Abbey, Lines composed a Few Miles above," 146, 270
"To a Young Lady who had been reproached," 169
Tolstoi, 335, 336
Tooke, Horne, 153, 165, 166
Town-end. *See* Dove Cottage
"Two Thieves, The," original of, 22
Tyson, Anne, Wordsworth's "dame" at Hawkshead, 20

Vallon, Marie Anne, called Annette, her relations with Wordsworth at Orleans, 97
writes to him at Racedown, 217
writes to him at Grasmere, 373
her services to French royalty, 513
visited by the Wordsworths, 569
her grave, 569
her descendants, 569
Vallon, Paul, brother of Annette, 97
"Vaudracour and Julia," 100, 116, 564
Virgil, Wordsworth translates, 576

"Waggonner, The," 436, 563
"Wanderings of Cain, The," 256
Watchman, The, Coleridge edits, 220, 228, 230, 294
"Waterfall and the Eglantine, The," 171
Watson, Richard, Bishop of Llandaff, 154, 155
Wedgwood, Josiah and Thomas, 258
"Whirl-blast, A," 264
"White Doe of Rylstone, The," 471-476, 536
White, W. Hale, 326, 327, 409
Wilberforce, William, 53, 54, 76
Wilkinson, Thomas, 401, 429
Williams, David, author of "Lessons to a Young Prince," 193
Williams, Helen Maria, authoress and revolutionary, 94, 96, 353, 570
Wilson, John (called "Christopher North"), 334, 347, 489, 493
Winchelsea, Anne, Countess of, 564
Windy Brow, Calvert's farmhouse, 167
Wollstonecraft, Mary, 153, 193
Wordsworth, Anne, the poet's mother, 13, 16
Wordsworth, Caroline, the poet's French daughter,
her birth and baptism, 126
writes to her father, 373
walks with him at Calais, 373
her marriage, 507-513
visited by the Wordsworths, 569
her grave, 569
Wordsworth, Catherine, the poet's daughter, 499
Wordsworth, Christopher, the poet's brother,
his birth, 13
his character, 15, 32
at Hawkshead, 53
described by Dorothy, 128
his diary at Cambridge, 131
rector of Lambeth, 431 *n.*, 477
prominent in the Church, 490
Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, 431 *n.*
Wordsworth, Christopher, Bishop of Lincoln, the poet's nephew, son of his brother Christopher and author of "Memoirs of William Wordsworth," vii, 570
Wordsworth, Dora, really Dorothy, but always called Dora, the poet's daughter, later Mrs. Quillinan, 410, 477, 489, 581, 605, 607
Wordsworth, Dorothy, the poet's sister, her journals and letters, vii, 311-313
her birth, 13
her childhood, 14-16
reads Burns's poems in 1797, 48
her life at Penrith, 44-50
goes to Forncett rectory, 50
her anxiety about William in France, 126
longs to live with William, 141
her ecstatic description of him, 143
compares her brothers, 128, 144
studies Italian, 214
her happiness at Racedown, 216-219

Wordsworth, Dorothy, educates little Edward Montagu, 219
drives with Coleridge to Nether Stowey, 233
her love for Coleridge, 234
described by Coleridge, 235
her observation of nature, 259, 263
goes to Germany, 279
arrival at Grasmere, 305
settlement there, 306-311
idyllic life there, 355-371
her health and illness, 363
co-operation with her brother, 365-370
visits Calais to see Annette and Caroline, 272-276
her "Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland," 391-399
plans to attend Caroline's wedding, 507-512
describes the wedding, 512, 513
visits the Baudouins in Paris, 569
her journal of a visit to the Isle of Man, 583
her health breaks, 584
her long illness, 590
tribute from her brother, 598
her death, 610
Wordsworth, Gordon, the poet's grandson, vii, 283, 311
Wordsworth, John, the poet's father, 13-16
Wordsworth, John, the poet's brother, his birth, 13
joins walking party in Lake country, 302
described by Coleridge, 304
visits Grasmere, 321
his last voyage, 411
lost at sea, 412, 416
Wordsworth, John, the poet's son, 391, 477, 583
Wordsworth, Mary, born Hutchinson, the poet's wife, 52, 53, 219-221, 223, 299, 311, 313, 314, 358, 360, 364, 379, 610, 611
Wordsworth, Richard, the poet's uncle, 16, 167
Wordsworth, Richard, the poet's brother, 13, 53, 81, 93, 121, 128, 145
Wordsworth, Thomas, the poet's son, 431, 477, 501
Wordsworth, William, the poet's son, 490, 570, 583
Wordsworth, William, the poet, his birth, 13
his dependence on women, 2
his mastery of metrical form, 2
permanence of his language, 2
Wordsworth, William, philosophical value of his works, 3
his life broken in the middle, 5
his influence on the English race, 7
his exact knowledge of nature, 8
his and Coleridge's literary revolt was political in origin, 10
interpreter of the Revolution, 11
his childhood at Cockermouth, 13-16
death of his parents, 16
his school days at Hawkshead, 16-30
his college life at Cambridge, 30-40
first long vacation from college, 40
second long vacation, 52
third long vacation, 56
dedication to poetry, 43
love for the child "Lucy," 43
attracted to Mary Hutchinson, 52
walking tour on the Continent, 57-66
obtains his degree, 66
first sojourn in London, 67-72
hears Burke and Mrs. Siddons, 69
contemplates studying Oriental languages, 77, 79, 81
second visit to France, 79, 89-127
associates with the Girondists, 125
mysterious obscurity of his life in 1793, 141
incurs displeasure of his uncles, 145
shocked when Britain enters the war, 148
probable return to Paris during the Terror, 157
connection with English "Jacobins," 153-159
his Letter to Bishop Watson, 154-159
plans to establish *The Philanthropist*, 171
disappears from notice in 1795, 179
first meeting with Coleridge, 294, 209
resides at Racedown, 200-226
writes political satires, later suppressed, 210, 212, 214
his supposed "despondency" at Racedown, 215

Wordsworth, William, Coleridge calls him a "semi-atheist," 220, 405
visits Coleridge at Nether Stowey, 233
writes essay on morbid psychology, 254
resides at Alfoxden, 238-279
publishes "Lyrical Ballads," 275
plans visit to Germany, 276
goes to Germany, 279
disappears from Goslar, 283, 284
reappears in Göttingen, 287
returns from Germany, 293
visits the Hutchinsons at Sockburn, 300
walking tour in Lake country, 302
settles at Grasmere, 306-310
finishes Notes and Preface of "Lyrical Ballads," 321
composes "The Leech Gatherer," 322
composes "Michael," 323
writes to John Wilson, 349
works at "The Prelude" and "The Excursion," 352
goes to Annette at Calais, 353, 373-376
begins writing patriotic sonnets, 375, 437
marries Mary Hutchinson, 376-378
makes long tour in Scotland, 391-403
accepts patronage of Sir George Beaumont, 407
his argument for human immortality, 416, 417
reads "The Prelude" to Coleridge at Coleorton, 424
sonnets, range of his, 438
publishes "Poems in Two Volumes," 1807, 434, 471
change of political views, 453, 454
hospitality of himself and family, 477, 483, 487, 503, 608
removes to Allan Bank, 482, 487
misunderstanding with Coleridge, 495-500
removes to the Rectory, 496
defends Church Establishment, 500
Wordsworth, William, becomes a distributor of stamps, 502
his political opinions take final bent, 504
another visit to Scotland, 506
publishes "The Excursion" in 1814, 514
publishes "Poems," collective edition of 1815, 532
adopts peculiar classification of his poems, 533
publishes "The White Doe of Rylstone" in 1815, 472
triumphal odes after Waterloo, 537-540
decline in moral vigour, 538
attends Haydon's immortal dinner, 544
his portrait in Haydon's great picture, 544
engages in corrupt politics, 548
his style degenerates, 556
makes an anthology, 563
his contempt for younger poets, 571
opposition to political reform, 573
turns to ancient classics, 576
visits the Continent in 1820, 567
sees Annette and Caroline in Paris, 569
goes abroad in 1828 with Coleridge, 581
saddened by illness of Dorothy and Coleridge, 590
prematurely aged, 593
panic fear of political change, 594
Continental tour in 1837 with Robinson, 599
publishes fifth collective edition of poems, 599
receives honorary degree from Oxford, 606
portraits of him, 607
heartbroken by Dora's death, 608
is made Poet Laureate, 608
his death, 610
Wrangham, Rev. Francis, 199, 201, 203, 210-214, 351, 430

"Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems," 598
"Yarrow Unvisited," 399, 402, 403
"Yew Tree, Lines left upon a Seat in a," 179

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